GIVING AND RECEIVING

E·V·LUCAS

Gerald J. Elbert Mathematician
9.30.81

2-52

From George with best wishes.

GIVING AND RECEIVING

E. V. LUCAS

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GIVING AND RECEIVING

ESSAYS AND FANTASIES

BY

E. V. LUCAS

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GIVING AND RECEIVING. II

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GIVING AND RECEIVING

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ACCORDING to many of the Old Masters the earliest Christmas presents were given nearly two thousand years ago and were received probably with the utmost embarrassment. They consisted principally of gold and frankincense and myrrh, and were laid at the feet of a tiny Baby lying in a manger in a stable in Judæa, the givers being three Wise Men—some say even kings—from the East: Melchior, Caspar, and Balthasar. It is principally from pictures of the visit of the Three Kings that we derive our ideas of the incident; and it would now be a very arduous task to correct those ideas. But as a matter of Biblical history, the Child had long been born when the Wise Men arrived, and He was then not in the manger, but in the house. See St. Matthew's narrative, chapter ii, verse 11. St. Luke, in his story, makes the new-born Infant's first visitors neither Kings nor Wise Men from the East but shepherds.

In any case, the Baby can have had nothing to say, and how its mother, who had been in a state of surprise for some months, and her husband, who also had not a few thoughts to carry, behaved, we shall never know. But those were the first Christmas presents, and for nineteen centuries the custom of giving them has been growing; but whether the art of giving them is any nearer perfection now than then is a question. I know, at any rate, that I was given several last Christmas which were not as "exactly what I had been wanting" as I protested they were.

Be this as it may, it is firmly fixed in our minds that, on His entrance into the world, the little Jesus was greeted with golden vessels containing frankincense and myrrh, and all children born on December 25, since that December 25 so long ago, have felt it to be an injustice that their birthday and Christmas Day, by coinciding, should deprive them of half their proper meed of notice. A witty and fanciful friend of mine makes, however, the startling suggestion that in selecting that day on which to be born, Christ offers another proof of unselfishness. As to what the Infant thought as the grave strangers laid the offerings at His feet, we are in ignorance; but we know that later, at any rate, He gave some

attention to the question of gifts, for did He not bewilder all children (especially at Christmas) and puzzle not a few of their elders, by enunciating the astonishing proposition that it is more blessed to give than to receive?

Even those, however, who require time to take in the full significance of this saying will readily agree that giving is usually simpler—so much simpler indeed that there is almost no comparison between the two actions. Giving can be so easy as to be almost automatic, whereas receiving can make demands on every nerve. Givers, particularly careless ones—and most givers think too little—can survive to a great age and never have to practise any of the facial contortions and the tactful verbal insincerities which recipients of their generosity must be continually calling to their aid; whereas, if the art of giving were rightly understood and practised, the only expression to be seen on the features of the receivers of presents would be one of surprise and joy mingled, and that phrase, which is almost as common at Christmas time as "Same to you"—"Oh, thank you so much: it's exactly what I wanted," would ring with the bell-like tones and vibrations of genuineness. As it is—wholly because giving is so simple: an affair of a shop-

assistant's advice, of the writing of a cheque—as it is, most elephants are white.

Profane as well as sacred history tells us more of the giving of presents than of their reception. In fact, to enumerate the offerings of king to king is one of the historian's simple pleasures. But we have, as a rule, no information either as to the remarks made by the recipient whose appraising eye checked off the apes and the ivory and the peacocks, or the consultations of the Ministers of State as the consignment of generosity was being made up. One can see them in committee a few days before the monarch sets forth on his expedition to the friendly State: "Don't you think" (the Chancellor of the Exchequer is speaking), "don't you think two hundred milk-white steeds excessive? Wouldn't one hundred do?"

"Or even fifty?" says the Home Secretary.

"Yes, or even fifty. It isn't as if we were visiting a really first-class Power"—and so with the bars of gold, the precious stones, the spices (such as the Queen of Sheba carried to Solomon), all would have to be carefully measured according to the importance of the other king or the need of his alliance.

And then there is his side of the transaction: "Well, I must say I think they might have been a little less stingy. Only five hundred bales of

silk! Not enough for more than half the ladies of the Court; for you can't expect any two to wear the same colour. And only thirty palfreys! Distinctly on the mean side." I forget what Henry the Eighth gave Francis the First at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, but the odds are that not a little criticism resulted. And yet the odds also are that Francis vowed, hand on heart, that it was all exactly what he had been most desiring.

In those old days the first thought of the receiver of a present was to return it in kind; which has a certain crudity, and indeed imports an element of calculation into the act of giving at all. It was impossible for the visiting monarch not to speculate on what he was going to receive on his departure; and that is bad. A small child intently preparing, under what she conceives to be conditions of profound secrecy, a gift for her mother is one of the prettiest of sights. It would lose at least half its charm if it were the rule that on presenting the kettle-holder or egg-cover she was instantly to be handed one for herself.

Proverbial philosophy warns us not to look gift-horses in the mouth; but the lessons of the past point in the other direction. Troy would still be standing had the advice of the old saw been disregarded. None the less, it might do a

world of good if one Christmas—this next Christmas, for example—we all decided to tell the truth and say exactly what we thought of our presents. "Thank you for nothing. I can see where you've erased your own name and put mine in." "Surely I was worth more than three-and-eleven! I saw these at Harker's last week and noted the price." "What's the use of giving me a diary when you must know I never keep one?" "Good heavens, you don't really expect me to wear a tie of that colour!" But in spite of the salutary effect upon givers which might result, I doubt if we could go so far. The human family is held together so largely by compromise and lack of candour that its total disintegration might follow; and do we want that yet? Not before the next cricket season, at any rate.

So much for the wrong kind of present. As for the best, it has been laid down that no present is worth having unless the giver would rather have kept it for himself; and I think the truth lurks here. And there is still another variety, but it cannot be very common. At least—perhaps it is. At a certain home, the head of which was a stern and not too lavish autocrat in the house, whatever he might have been out of it, there was delivered one Christmas Eve a mysterious box brought by a mysterious

man, who refused to divulge any particulars; merely saying it was for the master. When, after much speculation, it was opened, it was found to contain a massive piece of silver, on which was an inscription stating that it was the gift of an unknown neighbour and was offered as some recognition of the many kind and generous acts which the recipient had, within the donor's cognisance, performed, often with complete anonymity. The master of the house did not conceal his satisfaction as he read this engraved testimonial, even if his family were more successful with their surprise. Long afterwards it was discovered that, with the idea of impressing them, he had sent it himself.

THE BATTLE OF THE MOTHERS

"How is it with aged women?"
NAT CHAPMAN.

WE were sitting in the smoking-room of the Club when the venerable Archdeacon entered. He had been so long absent that we asked him the reason. Had he been ill?

Ill? Not he. He didn't hold with illness. Never was better in his life. He had merely been on a motor tour with his mother.

"Do you mean to say," some one inquired—an equally aged member—almost with anger, certainly with a kind of outraged wonder, "that you have a mother still living?"

"Of course I have," said the Man of God. "My mother is not only living but is in the pink of condition."

"And how old is she?" the questioner continued.

"She is ninety-one," said the Archdeacon proudly.

Most of us looked at him with surprise and respect—even a touch of awe.

"And still motoring!" I commented.

"She delights in motoring."

"Well," said the testy man, "you needn't be so conceited about it. You are not the only person with an elderly mother. I have a mother too."

We switched round to this new centre of surprise. It was even more incredible that this man should have a mother than the Archdeacon. No one had ever suspected him of anything so extreme, for he had a long white beard and hobbled with a stick.

"And how old may your mother be?" the Archdeacon inquired.

"My mother is ninety-two."

"And is she well and hearty?"

"My mother," he replied, "is in rude health—or, as you would say, full of beans."

The Archdeacon made a deprecatory movement of dissociation from that vegetable.

"My mother not only motors," the layman pursued, "but she can walk. Can your mother walk?"

"I am sorry to say," said the Archdeacon, "that my mother has to be helped a good deal."

"Ha!" said the layman.

"But," the Archdeacon continued, "she has all her other faculties. Can your mother still read?"

"My mother is a most accomplished and assiduous knitter," said the rival son.

"No doubt, no doubt," the Archdeacon agreed; "but my question was, Can she still read?"

"With glasses—yes," said the other.

"Ha!" exclaimed the Archdeacon, "I thought so. Now, my dear mother can still read the smallest print without glasses."

We murmured our approval.

"And more," the Archdeacon went on, "she can thread her own needle."

We approved again.

"That's all very well," said the other, "but sight is not everything. Can your mother hear?"

"She can hear all that I say to her," replied the Archdeacon.

"Ah! but you probably raise your voice, and she is accustomed to it. Could she hear a stranger? Could she hear me?"

Remembering the trend of some of his after-lunch conversations I suggested that perhaps it would be well if on occasions she could not. He glowered down such frivolity and proceeded with his cross-examination. "Are you trying to assure us that your mother is not in the least bit deaf?"

"Well," the Archdeacon conceded, "I could not go so far as to say that her hearing is still perfect."

The layman smiled his satisfaction. "In other words," he said, "she uses a trumpet?"

The Archdeacon was silent.

"She uses a trumpet, Sir? Admit it."

"Now and then," said the Archdeacon, "my dear mother repairs the ravages of time with the assistance of modern mechanism."

"I knew it!" exclaimed the other. "My mother can hear every word. She goes to the theatre constantly: it is one of her great solaces. Now, your mother would have to go to the cinema if she wished to be entertained."

"My mother," said the Archdeacon, "would not be interested in the cinema" (he pronounced it kinēma); "her mind is of a more serious turn."

"My mother is young enough to be interested in anything," said the other. "And there is not one of her thirty-eight grandchildren of whose progress she is not kept closely informed."

He leaned back with a gesture of triumph.

"How many grandchildren did you say?" the Archdeacon inquired. "I didn't quite catch."

"Thirty-eight," the other man replied.

Across the cleric's ascetic features a happy smile slowly and conqueringly spread. "My mother," he said, "has fifty-two grandchildren." He gave us time for the figure to sink in. "And

now," he turned to me, "which of us would you say has won this entertaining contest?"

"I should not like to decide," I said. "I am—fortunately perhaps for your mothers—no Solomon. My verdict is that both of you are wonderfully lucky men."

MY SCULPTOR

AMONG the knick-knacks in the rooms which Meyrick had lent me was one that pleased me particularly—a baby boy in bronze kicking the void with tremendous gusto and glee. Standing in the window, as he did, he was the first thing one saw against the light: a symbol of lively energy and fun. The name of the sculptor—GOALI—in capitals, was on the front of the base, rather more in evidence, I thought, than is usual; but one has so often to hunt, and many times in vain, for the signature on a bronze, that such prominence could not offend.

Some names, as you know, cling to the memory as surely as others evade it, and whenever I caught sight of the figure I thought of its moulder, and I used to peer about in Art shops for other examples of Goali's work. I even inquired of two or three Bond Street dealers if they could show me anything by him. But I was out of luck.

Goali? No, they had nothing of his; not at the moment. They could show me a figure by Pomeroy. A mask of Reid Dick's. Did I care for Wells's peasants? Haseltine's bronze horses?

I was interested, I said, in Goali. Figures of merry romping children.

Yes, yes. But at the moment they had nothing.

In idle moments I used to wonder what Goali was like and where he worked—was even now working. Probably in Rome. To any one who causes me to think of Rome I am grateful, and I was grateful to Goali. I would sometimes fancy myself sharing his life. A walk in the Pincio Gardens before he settled to work in his studio somewhere off the Via del Babuino. Then his modelling, with probably one of his own olive-skinned brood as sitter, and Signora Goali there to keep it happy and exchange gossip with her husband. I could see his rumpled black hair and his hands all over the white clay.

They would have lunch in their own apartment: spaghetti (which the Goalis, even the children, would all manage with a careless dexterity heart-breaking to the self-conscious English), perhaps some infinitesimal birds—uccelli—on a skewer, and some red wine and water; and then Goali would hurry off for coffee at that noisy friendly place in the Corso, all of whose frequenters know each other and have so much to say. What is it called? Oh, yes, Aragno's. There he would smoke uncountable

cigarettes and glance at the paper and laugh and gesticulate and discuss.

After that, more work, and then he might (at any rate I preferred that he should) make for the *pallone* court a little way outside the Porta del Popolo and win or lose a few *lire* over the games, putting his money on the giant *battitore;* and at evening I would see that he dined, as an event, with the Signora and a few of their artistic friends, at that curious old restaurant in Trastevere with the long name that begins with "P," where the fish is so good and you are waited upon by a hunchback with sparkling eyes.

Another time I would make Goali a Florentine and share his life in his own beautiful city; and one very hot day I made him a Venetian and we bathed at the Lido. After all, he might easily be a Venetian. In those sculpture shops in the Piazza of San Marco such works as Goali's are the principal stock-in-trade.

Everybody who came to see me liked the little bronze boy with his chubby foot in the air—the blithe spirit of him and his rounded grace.

"That's a jolly thing," they would say. "Who did it?"

"Goali," I would reply. "The name's underneath."

Sometimes a guest would know all about him. Jack Raynor, for instance, who early made omniscience his hobby, was delighted to find that I had an example.

"Oh, yes: Goali," he said. "He's made a corner in children. Dashed clever thing to do, because kids are so popular. You get nice easy lines too. I forget where he comes from, either Milano or Torino, I fancy."

"Are you sure?" I asked, a little sadly, for I was disappointed; "I should so much rather he came from Rome. I think of him as from the South anyway. I don't really see why he shouldn't be a Neapolitan"; and as I spoke I saw Goali loitering on the sea wall between Naples and Posilippo watching just such a boy as he had modelled playing in the sun with other mischievous little rogues.

"I believe he's a Northerner," Jack Raynor replied. "But I'll find out for certain."

And then after his long holiday Meyrick came back and I had to find rooms elsewhere.

"I hope you've been comfortable," he said, "and all those odds and ends"—he included his beloved articles of virtû with a sweeping hand—"haven't bored you."

I reassured him. "And as for that bronze baby," I said, "he's been the apple of my eye."

"Oh, the little kicking cherub," he replied.

"Yes, I like that too; but I've always rather resented the football idea. He so obviously represents the sheer joy of life that it's silly to give it that title."

"What title?" I asked.

"Why, 'GOAL!' " he said.

" 'Goal!' " I examined the bronze more closely. "Is that 'Goal?' " I asked. "The lettering's very poor, isn't it? The exclamation mark's exactly like an 'I.' I always thought—. Well, no matter what I thought. Who do you think is the sculptor?"

"I haven't a notion," he said. "It's unsigned. But I fancy it's English."

Signor Goali, my evanescent Italian friend, farewell.

UNO FIASCONE

MY friend Goali, even though he never lived and modelled, existed in fancy long enough to bring back very vividly old days in Rome. In particular, those rooms over the shop not very far from the famous flight of steps where the flower-girls sit with their big blossoming baskets; not very far from the house where Keats died.

When one is in Rome, to do as Rome does is not enough. So I had argued. One must speak as Rome speaks, too; otherwise how can one have any fun? Of what use to sit outside Aragno's if every word trilling and rolling in the circumambient air is incomprehensible? How elucidate the titles of pictures? How conduct disputes with cabmen, porters and others of the traveller's natural foes? And worse almost than useless to meet the beautiful Roman ladies!

I determined therefore that I would stay in a polyglot hotel only just so long as it took me to find rooms in a truly Roman house, where nothing but Italian was talked, and where I should be forced either to overcome any natural lin-

guistic indolence or suffer every kind of discomfort. Thus should I learn the language. All hotels are alike—no matter where they are—and so long as I was in one of them I should not acquire a single indigenous phrase; but in rooms the vocabulary would grow and the syntax gradually be acquired. That (I said) is the only way—to live in rooms among the people.

I possessed a few words, of course. One cannot frequent London restaurants and be utterly ignorant of Italian. But they were very few, and all, or nearly all, bore rather upon physical requirements than, say, philosophy. Signor Benedetto Croce's wisdom remained a sealed book to me, although I could make some kind of a success in ordering either a *collazione* or a *pranzo*. But such words as I had were, so to speak, single bricks. There was a total lack of mortar. I could command *spaghetti*, but I could not then say, "I don't like these *spaghetti*. They are insufficiently cooked. Perhaps I could have something else instead." By going into residence in rooms in a thoroughly Italian house I felt that all these little defects would be put right.

Cheaper too.

Having decided upon the neighbourhood I preferred—somewhere near the famous flight of

steps—I began to look about for placards with notices of apartments to let. (I forget the phrase, but I knew it then.) There were many, and I visited them all, but some objection was always present. Often it was merely personal distaste on my side, but usually it was the circumstance that English was spoken. Most English people seeking rooms in Rome prefer, it seems, that their own tongue should be the only one that is employed. Hence a smattering of English was common among the landladies, and they freely boasted of it.

At last, however, I struck a piece of good fortune. I came to a large and what must have been once a patrician mansion, with the whole first floor to let. The rooms were vast, with high white walls and cold red tiles. There was a gigantic sitting-room, a palatial bedroom, and a little annexe in which a bath had been placed. Ancient and massive furniture was scattered frugally about. Outside the sitting-room was a balcony, over which at the moment—it was autumn—a vine was clambering, with little purple grapes within reach of an idle hand; and below was a tangled and very foreign garden. Two centuries ago some important Roman had lorded it here; to-day it was in the tenancy of a tailor, or rather two tailors, a father and son. And it was the father, an aged man with-

out a word of English, who showed me round. Thoughts of Andrea del Sarto made the idea of living at an Italian tailor's rather attractive, and as I liked the place we began to bargain.

This we accomplished with the assistance of pencil, paper and a dictionary; but I need tell no one familiar with Italy that the old man never ceased talking all the time. The two controlling words of the discourse were *figlio* and *moglie*; and, although as to what he said about those two personages I had no notion, I was conscious that it was something that he clearly thought I ought to know and should like to know.

I forget what was decided upon—how many *lire* a week—but we came to an arrangement and I intimated that I would bring my things there during the afternoon and settle in at once. I also paid a month in advance.

At half-past five, therefore, I arrived in a loaded four-wheeler and entered the tailors' shop. The old man was delighted to see me and at once began to call loud up the stairs.

In a minute or so a young woman hurried down and greeted me.

It was his son's wife, his *figlio's moglie*.

"Good afternoon," she said. "I put the kettle on in kise you wanted some tea. I'm

sure we'll all do our best to mike you comfy while you're 'ere."

The tailor's son had married a girl from Islington!

That was many years ago. I am still unable to ask for something to take the place of undercooked *spaghetti.*

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

IN the course of my search for Italian conversation manuals I came upon one which put so strangely novel a complexion on our own tongue that, though it was not quite what I was seeking, I bought it. To see ourselves as others see us is notoriously a difficult operation; but to hear ourselves as Italians hear us is by this little book made quite easy. Every one knows the old story of the Italian who entered an East-bound omnibus in the Strand and petrified the conductor by asking to be put down at Kay-ahp-see-day. Well, this book was perhaps built up on the bitterness of that experience.

But its special attraction is the personality of the protagonist as it is revealed by his various conversations and remarks. Most of us who are not linguists confine our conversations in foreign places to the necessities of life, rarely leaving the beaten track of bread and butter, knives and forks, the times of trains, cab fares, the way to the station, the way to the post-office, hotel prices and washing lists. But this Italian in England is intrepid. He has no such reluctances. He embroiders and dilates. Where

we in Italy would at the most say to the *cameriere, "Portaci una tazza di caffé,"* and think ourselves lucky to get it, he lures the London waiter to invite a disquisition on the precious berry.

Thus, he begins: *"Còffi is ri-marchêbl fòr iz vère stim-iùlêtin pròpèrtê. Du ju nô hau it uòs discòvvard?"*

The waiter very promptly and properly saying, "Nô Sôr," the Italian unloads as follows: *"Uèl, ai uil tèl ju thèt iz discòvvaré is sêd tu hèv bin òchêsciònt bai thi fòllôin sôrcòmstanz. Somgôts, hu braus-t òp-òn thi plènt, fròm huicc thi còffi sîds ar gàthard, uèar òbsèrv-d bai thi gôthards tu bi èchsîdingle uêchful, ènd òfn tu chêpar èbaut in thi nait; thi pràior ôv ê nébariñ mònnastere, uiscin tu chip his mònchs êuêch èt thèar mattins, traid if thi côffi ud prôdiùs thi sêm éffécht òp-òn thèm, ès it uòs òbsèrv-d tu du òp-òn thi gôts; thi sòch-sès òv his èchspèrimênt lèd tu thi apprèsciêsciòn òv iz valliù."*

A little later a London bookseller has the temerity to place some new fiction before our author, but pays dearly for his rash act. In these words does the Italian let him have it:— *"Ai du nòt laich nòv-èls èt òl, bicô-s ê nòv-èl is bàt è fich-tisciòs têt stof-t òv sô mène fantastical dîds ènd nònsènsical uòrds, huicc òpsèt maind ènd hàrt. An-hêppe thô-s an-uêre jòngh pèr-*

sòns, hu spènd thèar prê-sciòs taim in riding nòv-èls! Thê du nòt nô thèt nòv-èllists, -uẹ̀ß nèralle spichin, ar thi laitèst ènd thi môst huimsical raittars, hu hèv uêstêd ènd uêst thèar laif in liùdnès."

English people abroad do not, as a rule, drop aphorisms by the way; but this Italian mentor loves to do so. Thus, to one stranger (in the section devoted to Virtues and Vices), he remarks, *"Uithaut Riligiòn ui sciùd bi uòrs thèn bîsts."* To another, *"Thi igotist spîchs còntinniùalle òv himsèlf ènd mêchs himsèlf thi sèntar òv èvvère thingh."* And to a third, *"Impôlaitnès is disgôstin."* He is sententious even to his hatter: *"Ê hèt sciùd bi prôpôrsiònd tu thi hèd ènd pèrsòn, fòr it is lâf-ibl tu sî ê largg hèt òp-òn ê smòl hèd, ènd è smôl hèt òp-òn ê largg hèd."*

But sometimes he goes all astray. He is, for instance, desperately ill-informed as to English railway law. *"In England,"* he says, and believes the pathetic fallacy, *"thi trêns start ènd arraiv vêre pòngh-ciùalle, òthar-uais passèngiars hu arraiv-lêt fòr thèar bisnès, cud siù thi Compane fòr dèm-êgg-s."*

He is calm and collected in an emergency. *"Bi not êfrêd, Madam,"* he says to a lady in flames, *"thi fair hès còt jur gaun. Lé daun òp-òn thi flòr, ènd ju uil put aut thi fair with*

jur hènds." His presence of mind saves him from using his own hands for the purpose. Resourcefulness is indeed as natural to him as to Sir Christopher Wren in the famous poem. "*Uilliam* (he says), *if ènebòde asch-s fòr mi, ju uil sê thèt ai scèl be bèch in ê fòrt-nait.*"

Finding himself in the country—perhaps in Epping Forest—he becomes thus lyrical: "*In thi spring, nêcciòr sîms tu riviav, èvvère-thingh smails. Thi èrth is adòrnd with grîn, thi trîs ar dèch-d uith livs ènd blòssòms. In sciòrt, thi còntre is dilaitful, thi mèdôs ènd thi gardens ar ènamèld uith flaùàrs. In uintar, òn thi còntràre, èvvère thingh lènguisccès, ènd thi dés ar vère tidiòs. Ui chèn schèrs-le gô aut uith-aut ghèttin dôrte.*" And again: "*Thi mònth òv Màrcc is uindê. It is suît tu slîp in thi mònth òv Êpril. Thi còntrê luchs vère plèsênt in thi mònth òv Mê. Thê mô thi mèdôs in Giùn. It is èchsêdingle hòt in Giùlai.*"

Miss Butterfield crosses our path for a moment and is gone.

"*Mis Bòttarfild,*" he says, "*uil ju ghiv mi ê glàs òv uòtar, if ju plîs?*" And that is the end of the lady. Or I think so. But there is just a possibility that it is she whom he rebukes in a Coffee House: "*Mai diar, du nòt spîch òv pòllitichs in ê Coffi-Haus, fòr nô travvellar, if priùdènt, èvvar tòchs èbaut pòllitichs in pòb-*

lich." And again it may be for Miss Butterfield that he orders a charming present (first saying it is for a lady): *"Ghiv mi thèt rippitar sèt uith rubès, thèt straich-s thi aurs ènd thi hâf-aurs."*

Finally he embarks for Australia and quickly becomes as human as the rest of us. *"Thi uind,"* he murmurs uneasily, *"is raisin. Thi si is vèreròf. Thi mô-sciòn òv thi Stim-bôt mèch-s mi ànuèl. Ai fîl vère sich. Mai hèd is dizze. Ai hèv gòt ê hèd-êch."* But he assures a fellow-passenger that there is no cause for fear, even if a storm should come on. *"Du nòt bi àlarmd,"* he says, *"thèar is nò dêngg-ar. Thi Chèp-tên òv this Stim-ar is è vère clèvar mèn."*

His last words, addressed apparently to the rest of the passengers as they reach Adelaide, are these: *"Lèt òs mêch hêst ènd gô tu thi Còstòm-Haus tu hèv aur lògh-êggs èch-samint. In Ostrêlia, thi Còstòm-Haus Offisars ar nòt hòtte, bàt vère pôlait."*

THE EIGHT CITIES

ENGLAND has, officially and collectively, such decided views as to the immorality or undesirability of wagering and games of chance that, although most of us put and take, bet, and play cards for money, to do any of these things anywhere but in a licensed "place," such as part of a racecourse, or in private in a drawing-room or a club, is an offence against good morals and punishable by law. Right or wrong is purely a matter of locality!

Since the English always enjoy the luxury of two consciences, one individual and one civic, such odd discrepancies between our personal and our national opinions will persevere, and we meanwhile shall continue to enjoy the respect which the rest of the world entertains for elasticity and adaptivity. No doubt of that.

Having recently been watching Italy at its all-the-year-round amusement, so profitable to the revenue, of Lotto, and witnessed so little resultant distress and calamity, I am wondering if Lotto might not be introduced here as an example of taxation without tears. That it is unlikely to be, I know, even in a country where

gambling by newspaper coupons and gambling through turf commission agents (who are allowed to advertise in the papers) is encouraged, although poor little street-corner bookmakers are hurried before the magistrate. Nor am I sure that I want the acclimatization of Lotto; but I should like England to come out into the open about gambling generally. Our present state of humbug is very disgusting.

Let me, however, describe Lotto.

Every Saturday in the eight principal cities of Italy—Rome, Naples, Bari, Venice, Genoa, Florence, Turin, and Milan—at two o'clock, in some public place, a company assembles, consisting of three or four officials and a minute charity schoolboy. (I may not have the details of the ceremony exactly right, but I am near them.) One official holds above his head a well-shaken box containing the numbers from one to (I believe) ninety. Another holds above his head a dish. Then the little boy, who is very likely blindfolded, mounts a chair, and, reaching up, takes out a number from the box and places it in the other receptacle, and so on until he has taken five. Another citizen, utterly above suspicion, then, in the full view of such onlookers as have gathered, collects and announces these five numbers, and they are given to the press for immediate publication. All the fore-

going precautions, I should say, are taken to prevent the possibility of any of the numbers being previously known, or the possibility of any substitution.

That is what has happened, say, in Milan, to ascertain what Milan's five numbers are. Precisely similar means have meanwhile been taken in Rome, Naples, Bari, Turin, Venice, Florence and Genoa to obtain five numbers each. The result is as soon as possible tabulated in every Banco di Lotto window for the lucky to gloat over and the unlucky (who, I need hardly say, are more numerous) to deplore to the murmured accompaniment, "If only I had——"

We must now go backwards and see what has been happening all over Italy from morning to night ever since the previous Monday. To the various Government offices (you have seen little shops called Banco di Lotto constantly in Italian streets everywhere), the people have been flocking, all intent on the precarious task of finding numbers that will come up on the following Saturday afternoon, and putting money on them for purposes of gain. Every one has a flutter at Lotto at some time or other; many people make an effort every week. The institution might almost be called the silver lining of life. You can have as many chances to win as you like to pay for, and arrange your bets

as you will. You may try to name the numbers for all the eight towns, but the odds here would be so great that the Italian Exchequer could hardly pay you if you won.

To get all five numbers right for one town is worth a fortune, and it has only once or twice been done. The ordinary single bet is on three numbers for one town, the odds against which are refreshingly heavy, but most people distribute their numbers over all the eight—the rota, as it is called—or, perhaps, only three of them. The lowest amount that can be ventured is twenty-five centisimi—which used to be just under two-pence, but is now (1922) nearer a halfpenny. As I say, this wagering has been going on all the week, and all classes of society are represented, either in person or by deputy. The priests are great hands at it. But the real congestion is to be seen on Saturday morning, because the superstitious believe in waiting till the last moment, always hoping for further light from the gambler's heaven.

At two the offices close, and then life becomes a feverish blank until the newspaper boys begin to rush through the streets with the fatal results from the eight cities. The winnings, however, are not paid until Monday, and then only the smaller ones. For a real coup to be liquidated the winner must wait, because Italy knows just

as well as we do what red tape is, even though she may lack our glaring inconsistencies.

I used just now the phrase, "the superstitious," as though there were some followers of the Lotto gleam distinguished by possessing superstition as against others who have none. That was, of course, absurd, because all of them are superstitious. In the unceasing search for lucky numbers—for hints and suggestions—civilisation and nature are equally ransacked. Everything has numerical connotation, and especially dreams. There is even a big book—usually kept in the kitchen, but frequently sent for to be consulted "upstairs"—which is alphabetically arranged, giving all the dreams that a sensible Italian gambler is likely to have, with their corresponding numbers. Then there are lucky-number providers, such as Capuchin monks and hunchbacks. Many people when they go to be blessed by the Pope take a scheme of numbers with them, because when the Pope blesses you his blessing extends to all that you have upon you. Or so it is thought. Other persons find their inspiration in dates, such as the birthday of a lover; in the numbers of railway compartments and cabs; in hours and minutes, such as the exact time at which they are happiest; in the ages of chance acquaintances;

and, in short, in a thousand and one of the capricious ways that only gamblers know.

To those who can afford it, Lotto is an amusing enough experience. To the poor I have no doubt it is a snare, but not a very perilous one. Watching the faces of the eager scanners of Saturday afternoon papers, I used sometimes to see some very dazed and forlorn expressions, but nothing really tragic. More unhappiness, I fancy, could be suffered during the week by the undecided from their doubts as to whether twenty-one was not wiser than twenty, than on Saturday, from missing the prize. Wherever bets are made, whether on thoroughbreds or on numbers, these unfortunates are to be found—the most anxious and joyless of all the votaries of excitement.

Italy's passion for Lotto may not be more fierce than our own for betting on horses; but it is more desirable, for, as I say, it has the merit of being open, and also the State profits by it, whereas our State, so long as it refuses to countenance the pari-mutuel system, gains, from racing, nothing.

A sidelight on the universality of betting in puritanical England was mine the other day during a visit to the country.

"What strange things words are!" said my

hostess as we strolled along the herbaceous border.

"How do you mean?" I asked.

"Well," she said, "I have a man and his wife to help here, and when work is slack the man is allowed to take any small job he can find. After breakfast this morning I put to the wife the most natural and, on the face of it, most unambiguous question in the world. I said, 'What is your husband doing to-day?'

"It never occurred to me that there could be more than one way of taking such a form of words as that. But there is. For what do you think she replied? She said, 'I can't remember the name, Ma'am, but he wrote it on a piece of paper and told me to give it to the milkman and the grocer's boy. The three-thirty, he said. Each way.' "

A FORERUNNER OF D'ANNUNZIO

D'ANNUNZIO is not the only liberator who entered Fiume. I was there myself in 1889, in the same rôle, but with less ambition. Nor did I arrive in a motor car—it could not be done in those distant days—but in a tramp steamer.

Fiume is a white and yellow town, built along the narrow strip of flat shore or clinging to the sides of the mountains. It is divided in interest between the sea and the soil, half the place being concerned with shipping and the harbour, and the other half with vineyards. There is, however, a little interchange, for the peasants must descend the slopes in order to get their wine to the ships, while sailors who wish to return thanks for safety during tempests, or to ensure a prosperous voyage, have to climb high above the town to a ledge on which the mariners' chapel is perched. Here, if they are thinking only of the future, they merely light a candle, but if they have had a narrow escape they deposit a votive offering, which chiefly takes the form of a crude but vivid oil painting of a vessel under the direst difficulties, amid boiling indigo

waves, with her name intensely visible, while in one of the top corners, set in an oval effulgence, is the Virgin calmly surveying the storm and seeing that, in spite of the disturbance, all is well, or not too ill, with her faithful follower. Several artists in the town make a living by depicting these scenes.

Outside the church sat (when I was there) an old woman who sold charms against the perils of the deep. Since I bought some, for myself, for the captain of our ship, for the mates and the engineers, and we came safely back to England, I know that they were all that she said of them.

Our ship was taking on raw Hungarian or Dalmatian wine (which, by and by, such is the iniquity of vintners, was to be unloaded at Bordeaux and transformed into genuine French claret), and during this process, with the mates left in charge, the captain and I made little expeditions. Just outside Fiume, to the north, is the Whitehead torpedo factory; and we went there. Then the road runs on up the coast to Abbazia, a fashionable watering-place, where the bathing is done within a space wired against the incursion of sharks; and we went there in a carriage and pair, and sat among Austrians eating immoderately of veal.

But it was too hot for much enterprise, and

for the most part we sat in the shade and sipped, and smoked long cigars with straws in them, or played a variety of billiards with no pockets and little ninepins in the middle of the table.

And what of the liberation? Ah, yes, but it was so small a deed (compared with Gabriele's) that I was hoping you had forgotten about it. However, since it happened, and at Fiume, perhaps I had better tell.

One afternoon, after walking a little way out of the town, we came to a retired cottage inn, with tables under its trees, and decided that to repose there would be a more delectable proceeding than to adventure further. We therefore sank into chairs and ordered something to drink from a woman whose very forbidding appearance was the only discordant note. So haggish indeed was she that but for our lassitude and the pleasantness of the situation we should have hurried on. The wine, however, was refreshing, and the captain, who was a great performer on the monologue, resumed his narrative, either of a triumph of navigation or of love (his two themes), I forget which. But while he talked on, and the Adriatic, spreading itself as a mirror to the sun, increased the heat, my attention strayed and I became aware of a fluttering beating noise near by and little distressful chirps, and I saw that, nailed to the cottage wall, by the

door, in the full sunlight, was a tiny wooden cage, such as is made for birds to be carried in, not to dwell in, and in it was a rebellious and very unhappy goldfinch. The poor thing flung itself from side to side of its narrow prison in a disorder which was rapidly becoming a frenzy.

The woman emerging at this moment, I left my seat and made her look at the wretched captive; but she only laughed, and when I would have unhooked the cage to place it out of the sun she stopped me with a malignant gesture.

Very well, there was nothing to be done but what D'Annunzio would have done. I had to employ craft and address. Waiting till the harridan was well within the house again, I advanced to the cage, opened it and watched the goldfinch dart out and fly thankfully away; and then we also took to our wings, the captain not with less fear than I, but unsustained by any of the moral enthusiasm which seemed to me my due. He had, however, to retire equally fast, the heat being forgotten in the necessity for escape from that terrifying monster the innkeeper.

When we considered it safe we sat by the roadside to rest, and there exchanged felicitations on the fortunate circumstance that we sailed the next day. I was rather hoping for a

cordial word or two about my courage and humanity; but none came. "Let me see," said the captain, "where was I when you interrupted me to interfere with that bird?"

THE EVOLUTION OF WHIMSICALITY

THE title shall stand, because I like it; but it does not say all. By whimsicality, I ought to explain, I mean, broadly, modern humour, as distinguished from that which we find before the end of the eighteenth century. It may comprise all the earlier forms, but it is different, perhaps in its very blending, and it has one ingredient which the older forms lacked, and which, like the onion in the bowl of salad, as celebrated by one of its masters—Sydney Smith—"animates the whole." I refer to its unreluctant egoism. It is this autobiographical quality that is its most noticeable characteristic —the author's side-long amused canonization of himself; his frankly shameless assumption that if a thing is interesting to the writer it must therefore be of interest to the world. And with the development of whimsicality (as I call it) are bound up also the development of slippered ease in literature and the stages by which we have all become funnier. To-day every one can grow the flower, with more or less success, for every one has the seed.

Although the new humour comprises the old,

it has never reached its predecessor's heights in certain of its branches. Only in parody and nonsense have we gained. There has, for example, been no modern satire to equal Pope's and Dryden's and Swift's; no irony more biting than Swift's and Defoe's, or more delicate and ingratiating than Goldsmith's; no such cynical or grotesque humour as Shakespeare exults in; no rough-and-tumble buffoonery like Fielding's and Smollett's. In nonsense and in parody alone we have improved, the old days having nothing to offer to be compared with Lewis Carroll or Calverley; but in burlesque we cannot compete with "The Rehearsal," "The Beggar's Opera," or "The Critic."

But all those authors were impersonal. They suppressed themselves. We have no evidence as to whether Shakespeare was more like Falstaff or Prospero; probably he resembled both, but we cannot know. Goldsmith is the only autobiographer among them, but even he always affected to be some one else; he had not the courage of the first person singular, and Steele and Addison, eminently fitted as they were to inaugurate the new era, clung to tradition and employed a stalking horse. Even Sterne only pretended to be himself, although whimsicality in the strictest meaning of the word undoubtedly was his.

The period when whimsicality came in—the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century—was the period when a return to nature in poetry was in gestation; a movement beginning subconsciously with Cowper and Crabbe and finding its most eloquent conscious prophets in Wordsworth and Coleridge, and its gospel in the preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800. Coleridge and Wordsworth were the great wave. Beneath the impressive surface of the ocean which they crested, in the calm waters where letter writing is carried on (if I may be pardoned not the best of metaphors), the other development was in progress; correspondents were becoming more familiar. I would not allege that humour and the epistolary art were strangers until, say, 1780—there is, indeed, very good evidence to the contrary—but it was somewhere about that time that a more conscious facetiousness crept in, and just as Wordsworth's revolutionary methods held the field and ousted the heightened conventional language of the eighteenth-century poets, so did this new and natural levity gain strength. Hitherto men had divided themselves strictly between their light and their grave moods. But now gradually these moods were allowed to mingle, and in course of time quite serious people let their

pens frisk as merrily as the professional wags.

It was left for Charles Lamb so to confuse *déshabillé* and full dress that ever after him no author had any rigid need to keep them apart; but Lamb was not the fountain head. He had a predecessor; and we come to that predecessor, the real father of whimsicality, the first writer of our modern humorous prose, in a phrase in a letter of Lamb's on December 5, 1796—thus keeping the chain intact. Writing to Coleridge, Lamb refers to Cowper's "divine chit-chat," and although that phrase no doubt applied to "Table Talk" and "The Task" and other poetical monologues, we may here borrow it to describe the ease and fun and unaffected egoism which in Cowper's letters are for the first time found in perfection in English literature. As early as 1778 he was writing like this (to William Unwin):

> We are indebted to you for your political intelligence, but have it not in our power to pay you in kind. Proceed, however, to give us such information as cannot be learned from the newspapers: and when anything arises at Olney, that is not in the threadbare style of daily occurrences, you shall hear of it in return. Nothing of this sort has happened lately, except that a lion was imported here at the fair, seventy years of age, and was as tame as a goose. Your mother and I saw him embrace his keeper with his paws, and lick his face. Others saw him receive his head in his mouth, and restore it to him again

unhurt—a sight we chose not to be favoured with, but rather advised the honest man to discontinue the practice—a practice hardly reconcilable to prudence, unless he had a head to spare.

In 1779, again to William Unwin:

I remember,—(the fourth and last thing I mean to remember on this occasion), that Sam Cox, the Counsel, walking by the seaside as if absorbed in deep contemplation, was questioned about what he was musing on. He replied, "I was wondering that such an almost infinite and unwieldy element should produce a *sprat*."

And again, concerning a man named Twopenny:

It seems a trifle, but it is a real disadvantage to have no better name to pass by than the gentleman you mention. Whether we suppose him settled, and promoted in the army, the Church, or the law, how uncouth the sound—Captain Twopenny! Bishop Twopenny! Judge Twopenny! The abilities of Lord Mansfield would hardly impart a dignity to such a name. Should he perform deeds worthy of poetical panegyric, how difficult it would be to ennoble the sound of Twopenny!

> Muse! place him high upon the lists of Fame,
> The wondrous man, and Twopenny his name!

But to be serious, if the French should land in the Isle of Thanet, and Mr. Twopenny should fall into their hands, he will have a fair opportunity to frenchify his name, and may call himself Monsieur Deux Sous; which, when he comes to be exchanged by Cartel, will easily resume an English form, and slide naturally into Two Shoes, in my mind a considerable improvement.

In 1780, with a copy of verses, to the same correspondent:

> I shall charge you a half penny apiece for every copy I send you, the short as well as the long. This is a sort of afterclap you little expected, but I cannot possibly afford them at a cheaper rate. If this method of raising money had occurred to me sooner, I should have made the bargain sooner; but am glad I have hit upon it at last. It will be a considerable encouragement to my muse, and act as a powerful stimulus to my industry. If the American war should last much longer I may be obliged to raise my price.

Such passages as these, limpid, unaffected, setting down daily trivialities as well and amusingly as was in the author's power, seem to me to mark the beginnings of much modern humour. There are hints of the same quality in Walpole and in Gray, but those writers are of their own time, and to us they are often archaic. Cowper was the first to handle the new prose, although he did not come out into the open with it. He was, publicly, a poet, and was read for his poetry. The innovating work that he had begun, if it was to prosper, needed a public writer to make it generally acceptable, and such was Charles Lamb. If Cowper was the father of whimsicality, Lamb was its chief popularizer.

Lamb's great discovery was that he himself was better worth laying bare than obscuring: that his memories, his impressions, his loyalties,

his dislikes, his doubts, his beliefs, his prejudices, his enthusiasms, in short, everything that was his, were suitable material for literature. Pope said that the proper study of mankind was man; Lamb amended this to—the proper study of each man is himself. If you know yourself and have confidence in your moods and general sagacity, a record is worth making. Addison and Steele had even better opportunities to be disclosing than Lamb: they had a daily paper, and could write every morning exactly what they liked, and often must have been so hard put to it for subjects that autobiography would seem to be the easy way; yet they were always inventing. The time for personal confidences had not come. But whether Lamb would have been as he is without these forerunners is a question. In so far as the modernity of his humour is concerned I think that he would, but no doubt his early contributions to *The Reflector,* some ten years before *Elia,* were based on the old models. Years, however, before he wrote those (in 1811) for print, he had, for private friendly eyes only, penned such passages in his letters as this (in April, 1800, to Coleridge):

> You read us a dismal homily upon "Realities!" We know, quite as well as you do, what are shadows and what are realities. You, for instance, when you

are over your fourth or fifth jorum, chirping about old school occurrences, are the best of realities. Shadows are cold, thin things, that have no warmth or grasp in them. Miss Wesley and her friend, and a tribe of authoresses that come after you here daily, and, in defect of you, hive and cluster upon us, are the shadows. You encouraged that mopsey, Miss Wesley, to dance after you, in the hope of having her nonsense put into a nonsensical Anthology. We have pretty well shaken her off, by that simple expedient of referring her to you; but there are more burrs in the wind.

I came home t'other day from business, hungry as a hunter, to dinner, with nothing, I am sure, of *the author but hunger* about me, and whom found I closeted with Mary but a friend of this Miss Wesley —one Miss Benjé, or Benjey—I don't know how she spells her name. I just came in time enough, I believe, luckily, to prevent them from exchanging vows of eternal friendship. It seems she is one of your authoresses, that you first foster, and then upbraid us with. But I forgive you. "The rogue has given me potions to make me love him." Well; go she would not, nor step a step over our threshold, till we had promised to come and drink tea with her next night. I had never seen her before, and could not tell who the devil it was that was so familiar.

We went, however, not to be impolite. Her lodgings are up two pairs of stairs in East Street. Tea and coffee, and macaroons—a kind of cake I much love. We sat down. Presently Miss Benjé broke the silence, by declaring herself quite of a different opinion from D'Israeli, who supposes the differences of human intellect to be the mere effect of organization. She begged to know my opinion. I attempted to carry it off with a pun upon organ; but that went off very flat. She immediately conceived a very low opinion of my metaphysics; and turning round to

Mary, put some question to her in French—possibly having heard that neither Mary nor I understood French. The explanation that took place occasioned some embarrassment and much wondering.

She then fell into an insulting conversation about the comparative genius and merits of all modern languages, and concluded with asserting that the Saxon was esteemed the purest dialect in Germany. From thence she passed into the subject of poetry; where I, who had hitherto sat mute and a hearer only, humbly hoped I might now put in a word to some advantage, seeing that it was my own trade in a manner. But I was stopped by a round assertion that no good poetry had appeared since Dr. Johnson's time. It seems the Doctor has suppressed many hopeful geniuses that way by the severity of his critical strictures in his *Lives of the Poets*. I here ventured to question the fact, and was beginning to appeal to *names*, but I was assured "it was certainly the case." Then we discussed Miss More's book on education, which I had never read. . . .

It being now nine o'clock, wine and macaroons were again served round, and we parted, with a promise to go again next week and meet the Miss Porters, who, it seems, have heard much of Mr. Coleridge, and wish to meet *us*, because we are *his* friends. I have been preparing for the occasion. I crowd cotton in my ears. I read all the reviews and magazines of the past month against the dreadful meeting, and I hope by these means to cut a tolerable second-rate figure.

I can find nothing quite like that, so humorous, and rapid, in any writer before Lamb. There is hardly an antiquated word in it. But what is more interesting about it is that no one hitherto would have thought the narration

worth while. That, perhaps, is the most significant thing.

Another example from the same year, 1800, the account of Joseph Cottle (author of *Alfred*) being gradually wooed from his grief for his brother Amos Cottle's death, and I shall have quoted enough.

I suppose you have heard of the death of Amos Cottle.

I paid a solemn visit of condolence to his brother, accompanied by George Dyer, of burlesque memory. I went, trembling to see poor Cottle so immediately upon the event.

He was in black; and his younger brother was also in black.

Everything wore an aspect suitable to the respect due to the freshly dead. For some time after our entrance nobody spoke till George modestly put in a question, whether *Alfred* was likely to sell.

This was *Lethe* to Cottle, and his poor face, wet with tears, and his kind eye brightened up in a moment. Now I felt it was my cue to speak.

I had to thank him for a present of a magnificent copy, and had promised to send him my remarks,—the least thing I could do; so I ventured to suggest, that I perceived a considerable improvement he had made in his first book since the state in which he first read it to me. Joseph until now had sat with his knees cowering in by the fireplace, and with great difficulty of body shifted the same round to the corner of a table where I was sitting, and first stationing one thigh over the other, which is his sedentary mood, and placidly fixing his benevolent face right against mine, waited my observations.

At that moment it came strongly into my mind,

that I had got Uncle Toby before me, he looked so kind and good.

I could not say an unkind thing of *Alfred*. So I set my memory to work to recollect what was the name of Alfred's Queen, and with some adroitness recalled the well-known sound to Cottle's ears of Alswitha.

At that moment I could perceive that Cottle had forgot his brother was so lately become a blessed spirit. In the language of mathematicians, the author was as 9, the brother as 1.

I felt my cue, and strong pity working at the root I went to work, and beslabbered *Alfred* with most unqualified praise, or only qualifying my praise by the occasional politic interposition of an exception taken against trivial faults, slips, and human imperfections, which, by removing the appearance of insincerity, did but in truth heighten the relish.

Perhaps I might have spared that refinement, for Joseph was in a humour to hope and believe *all things*.

What I said was beautifully supported, corroborated and confirmed by the stupidity of his brother on my left hand, and by George on my right, who has an utter incapacity of comprehending that there can be anything bad in poetry.

All poems are *good* poems to George; all men are *fine geniuses*.

So, what with my actual memory, of which I made the most, and Cottle's own helping me out—for I had really forgotten a good deal of *Alfred*—I made shift to discuss the most essential part, entirely to the satisfaction of its author, who repeatedly declared that he loved nothing better than *candid* criticism. Was I a candid greyhound now for all this? or did I do right? I believe I did. The effect was luscious to my conscience.

For all the rest of the evening Amos was no more

heard of, till George revived the subject by inquiring whether some account should not be drawn up by the friends of the deceased to be inserted in Phillips' *Monthly Obituary;* adding, that Amos was estimable both for his head and heart, and would have made a fine poet if he had lived.

To the expediency of this measure Cottle fully assented, but could not help adding that he always thought that the qualities of his brother's heart exceeded those of his head.

I believe his brother, when living, had formed precisely the same idea of him; and I apprehend the world will assent to both judgments.

One feels that the man who could be writing with such sureness and zest as that in the year 1800 ought to have come to his *Elia* vein—1820—sooner. But the clock always has to strike first.

Puns in their absurd latter-day form also were coming in in the same decade that gave us the *Lyrical Ballads*. There had been puns before—Shakespeare has many, and Swift and Doctor Sheridan rejoiced in exchanging them—but they were less light-hearted, more verbal; the pun with nonsense to it, such as we associate first with Lamb, is not earlier than he. In a magazine published in 1793 (when Lamb was eighteen) I find this fragment of history gravely set forth: "When the seamen on board the ship of Christopher Columbus came in sight of San Salvador they burst out into exuberant

mirth and jollity. 'The lads are in a merry key,' cried the commodore. America is now the name of half the globe." That is not at all like the eighteenth century, but the century that was to produce Hood and H. J. Byron and F. C. Burnand.

Before *Elia,* no one writing for print had assumed that his own impressions of life, grave and gay, were a sufficient or even a suitable subject. Such self-analytical authors as there had been had selected and garnished according to the canons of taste of their time. Lamb came naturally to his task and fondled and exhibited his ego with all the ecstasy of a collector displaying bric-à-brac or first editions; and ever since then, acting upon his sanction, others have been doing it. But what has at the moment the most interest to me is that part of Lamb's legacy which embodies his freakish humour; it was his willingness to be naturally funny that has benefited so many heirs. I should say that his principal service to other writers lay in giving them, by his example, encouragement to be natural, to mix their comic fancies with their serious thoughts—as they are mixed in real life. The mingled thread, he showed, should never be divided.

The influence of letters must not be stressed; for the examples from Lamb were written be-

fore he could have seen any of Cowper's correspondence, while none of Lamb's letters were made public until Talfourd's memoir of him in 1837. But although Lamb could not be influenced by Cowper's prose until 1804—nor needed to be, then—he was stimulated by the "divine chit-chat" of his verse, which brought a happy egoism into general popularity. He then developed and simmered for a couple of decades, and the next great event in the evolution of whimsicality was the outcome of those comparatively silent years, the *Elia* essays beginning in the *London Magazine* in 1820.

Thus we have four notable years: 1782, Cowper's first *Poems*—"Table Talk," etc.; 1785, *The Task* (with "John Gilpin"); 1804, new edition of Hayley's *Life of Cowper*, with correspondence added; 1820, *Elia* essays begin.

I don't want to suggest any conscious derivation from Lamb in modern writers. To begin with, no writer who is an imitator can be worth anything; but a writer can be both an individual and under influence. He can move on parallel lines with his predecessor, not intentionally, but through a similarity of outlook. It would be absurd, in spite of his own admission with regard to sedulous apishness, to say, for example, that Stevenson imitated Lamb; but what one may contend is that but for the new easy

familiar personal turn which Lamb gave to literature, Stevenson's *Inland Voyage* and *Travels with a Donkey* might never have been written. Their derivation is more commonly given to Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* and, in so far as form goes, possibly with accuracy; but although the mould may be from Sterne, for the nature of the contents we are far more indebted to Lamb. Sterne was an affected piece, posturing and grimacing too often; but Lamb, who is always divulging, was above pretence, and the example which he set to writers coming after him was courage to be themselves, and to be all of themselves all the time.

Meanwhile, during the period when Lamb was writing Addisonian exercises for *The Reflector*, and preparing to be himself and nothing but himself ever after, a little boy was born—the year was 1812, and the date February 7—in an obscure house in an obscure part of Portsmouth. His father was a dockyard clerk, named John Dickens, and the little boy was christened Charles John Huffam, but the John and the Huffam quickly disappeared and Charles only remained. This boy, who was destined not only to delight the world into which he was projected, but to create a new world of his own, was, I am sure, fired by Lamb's example. I have seen somewhere, but cannot trace the reference, that

among Dickens's childish reading was *Elia*, which had begun in the *London Magazine* when he was eight. The other little Charles could thus have read, at the most impressionable age, the account of Ralph Bigod, the Micawberesque borrower of money, and of Jem White, who had such a glorious Dickensian way at the chimney sweeps' suppers. Even genius often has to be put in the right path. If it is admitted that Lamb influenced Dickens, then my point is firmly enough established, for Dickens was the first really comic writer that we have had, and his own influence must have been endless. Before Dickens, no author had tried to be as funny as he could, or at any rate no author had done so with any acceptance.

Cowper, then, and Lamb (with Walpole and Gray as less guilty accomplices) must be convicted of the sweet offence of bringing whimsicality into literature and making it all the easier for our own artists in that medium to make a living; in England, Mr. Beerbohm and Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton and Sir James Barrie, and in America (to name two only) Mr. Oliver Herford and Mr. Christopher Morley.

POINTS OF INTEREST

THE manager had seen to it that the party of young men, obviously being rich, at any rate for this night, had some of the best attendance in the restaurant. Several waiters had been told off specially to look after them, the least and busiest of whom was little more than a boy—a slender pale boy, who was working very hard to give satisfaction. The cynic might think—and say, for cynics always say what they think—that this zeal was the result of his youth; but the cynic for once would be only partly right. The zeal also had sartorial springs, this eventful day being the first on which the boy had been promoted to full waiterhood, and the first therefore on which he had ever worn a suit of evening dress; which by dint of hard saving his family had been able to obtain for him. Wearing a uniform of such dignity, and conscious that he was on the threshold of his career, he was trying hard to make good and hoping very fervently that he would get through without any grease drops or splashes to impair the freshness of his new and wonderful attire.

The party of young men, who had been at a very illustrious English school together and now were either at a university or in the world, were celebrating an annual event and were very merry about it. For the most part they had, between the past and the present, as many topics of conversation as were needed, but now and then came a lull, during which some of them would look around at the other tables, note the prettier of the girls or the odder of the men and comment upon them; and it chanced that in such a pause one of the diners happened for the first time to notice with any attention the assiduous young waiter. Although not old enough to have given any thought to the oddity of youth attending upon youth at its meals in this way—not old enough indeed to have pondered at all upon the relations of Capital and Labour, or of the domineering and the servile—he had reflected a good deal upon the cut and fit of clothes, and there was something about the waiting-boy's evening coat that outraged his critical sense. Nor did the fact that the other's indifferent tailoring throw the perfection of his own into such brilliant contrast (the similarity between the livery of service and the male costume *de luxe* fostering these comparisons) make him any more lenient.

"Did you ever see," he asked his neighbour,

"such a coat-collar as that waiting Johnnie's? I ask you. How can any one, even a waiter, wear a thing like that? Don't they ever see themselves in the glass, or if they do can't they see straight? Why, it covers his collar altogether."

His companion agreed.

"And the shoulders!" he went on. "You'd have thought that in a restaurant like this the management would be more particular. By George, that's a jolly pretty girl coming in! Look—over there, just under the clock, with the red hair." And the waiter was forgotten.

Forgotten, however, only by his table critics, for at that moment a little woman, who had made friends with the hall-porter for this express purpose, was peering through the window of the entrance, searching the room for her son. She had never yet seen him at his work at all, and certainly not in his grand and glorious new waiting clothes, and naturally she wanted to.

"Ah!" she said at last, pointing the boy out to the porter, "there he is! over there where all those young gentlemen are. Doesn't he look fine? And don't they fit him beautifully? Why, no one would know the difference if he were to sit down at the table and one of those young gentlemen was to wait on him."

A SIGNPOST

POSSIBLY from lack of time to devote to long bouts of reading, I have a growing fondness for reflections and sententiæ, before the wisdom of whose authors I am usually astonished and abashed. My latest discovery in this branch of literature is *Lacon; or, Many Things in Few Words,* by the Rev. C. C. Colton, and were the readers of aphorisms ever influenced by them, I should already be profoundly sensible and too good to live.

The author of *Lacon* had watched the world with closeness, and had brought an uncompromising and slightly scornful mind to bear upon what he saw. The result is a detached and mordant commentary on men and affairs, varied by counsels of perfection. In the interests of space I quote only from the briefer comments, but the longer are remarkable too, shrewdly thought and lucidly expressed:

> He that likes a hot dinner, a warm welcome, new ideas, and old wine will not often dine with the great.

> If you would be known, and not know, vegetate in a village; if you would know, and not be known, live in a city.

There is this difference between happiness and wisdom; he that thinks himself the happiest man really is so, but he that thinks himself the wisest is generally the greatest fool.

Were the life of man prolonged he would become such a proficient in villainy that it would be necessary again to drown or burn the world.

Hurry and Cunning are the two apprentices of Despatch and Skill, but neither of them ever learned their masters' trade.

Some reputed saints that have been canonized ought to have been cannonaded, and some reputed sinners that have been cannonaded ought to have been canonized.

Of all the marvellous works of the Deity, perhaps there is nothing that angels behold with such supreme astonishment as a proud man.

The good people of England do all that in them lies to make their king a puppet; and then, with their usual consistency, detest him if he is not what they would make him and despise him if he is.

By the way, I wonder if any other country has within her own borders such candid critics as England can ever boast. It is almost as much a point of honour in an Englishman to find his country imperfect as for a Scotchman to find perfection in his. Again, of England and her King:

A king of England has an interest in preserving the freedom of the Press, because it is his interest to know the true state of the nation, which the courtiers would fain conceal, but of which a free Press alone can inform him.

A Signpost

And this of kings generally:

> If kings would only determine not to extend their dominions until they had filled them with happiness, they would find the smallest territories too large, but the longest life too short, for the full accomplishment of so grand and so noble an ambition.

It must be great fun to write aphorisms, although there cannot be much money in it—until editors adopt generally the practice of that famous Frenchman who paid twice as much for half-a-column as for a column, twice as much for a quarter of a column as for a half, and most of all for a good paragraph. But apart from money, which has nothing to do with the pleasures of craftsmanship, it must be great fun to write aphorisms, because one has all the satisfaction and excitement of fitting the words into the right place, having plenty of time to do it in (since only the unhasty are aphoristic), while one knows also the content that comes from scoring off poor humanity, one's constant butt. Were men and women not fallible, the aphorist would disappear. As it is, he comes out as the single notable exception.

But physicians have been known to fail as their own patients. Having read much in *Lacon*, I had the curiosity to turn up its author's career in *The Dictionary of National Biography* and there I found strange matter. Who the

first parson was to adjure his flock "to do as he said and not as he did" I am unaware, but it might well have been the Rev. Charles Caleb Colton. Born in 1780 and educated at Eton and King's, he became rector of Prior's Portion, Tiverton, at the age of twenty-one, and took seriously to angling. After neglecting his parish for many years in favour of satirical verse and sport, he was given the living of Kew and Petersham, but preferred to dress as a soldier and reside in squalid London lodgings, accompanied by old books and fishing rods. He also added to his cure of souls the business of a wine merchant, but did not prosper in it.

In 1820 the first part of *Lacon* was published, and in 1822 the second, and both were popular. Meanwhile, however, while their cool sagacity was being eagerly studied, their author was losing at the gaming-tables all that he possessed. England becoming too hot for him, he resided in America and in France, and in 1832 committed suicide at Fontainebleau at the age of fifty-two.

On one of the pages of *Lacon* I find this:

> Suicide sometimes proceeds from cowardice, but not always, for cowardice sometimes prevents it, since many live because they are afraid to die.

I should not be surprised to learn that Colton's suicide had an element of courage in it.

BREGUET

REFLECTIVE writers have remarked upon the curious circumstance that having met with a new word one then hears it continually. Not only is it true of words, but also of ideas and people. It was so with me and Breguet. I had lived for many years on this perplexing globe, not uninterested in a variety of things, before the name of the distinguished Frenchman ever fell upon my ear. Then came an evening, a year ago, when after dinner several of us compared watches. And my neighbour (a famous builder of palaces) placed in my hand a delicate neutral-tinted time-piece, slender and shy, with a small dial within the large one: a symphony in grey, silver and old gold. It made all the modern horological achievements which we others possessed look either very common or very assertive.

"What a lovely thing!" I said.

"It's a Breguet," said he.

"Breguet?"

"Yes, the great French watch-maker. It's well over a hundred years old. A repeater too"—and he touched a spring and we listened to its gentle tinkle.

It was built, he told us, for one of the British ambassadors in Paris.

There is no need for me to say that, rare as Breguets are, the very next day, sitting at lunch with an old friend, I discovered that he had a Breguet too: also historic, for it claimed to be the first stem-winder; and this too had the slimness that most people think is a recent invention, and this also was of a grave smoky beauty. And then another friend told me that his father used to collect Breguets and he himself had one but did not carry it: he kept it, in fact, at the Bank.

By this time I was an enthusiast, while a deep distaste for my own watch gradually possessed me. And then I heard of a Breguet for sale. . . .

Let, here, a veil be drawn.

Meanwhile, although I did not know it, the printers of an English provincial paper were hard at work on a limited edition of a monograph on the great watch-maker by Sir David Salomons, who has been amassing examples of Breguet's skill for years, and a copy of this book—with the simple title *Breguet*—is now at my side, packed with photographs of every type of Breguet watch and telling of their creator all there is to know: such as, that the original Breguet, Louis Abraham or Abraham Louis, was

born at Neuchatel in Switzerland in 1747, and at the age of fifteen was apprenticed to a watchmaker at Versailles, in 1762. In the evenings he learned mathematics at the Collège Mazarin. A dim period followed, but in or about 1769 the young man is found established in business, among his customers being the King and Queen and Court. Watches that he made for Louis XVII and Marie Antoinette are in Sir David Salomons' collection.

Early in the Revolution, Breguet, who was a bit of a Sans Culotte, was instrumental in helping Marat to escape from an awkward situation, and Marat rewarded him by getting him a "safe pass" across the Channel in 1793. He was in England for two years, working partly for George III, and assisted by the pocket-book stuffed with bank-notes with which a French friend in London generously provided him. Returning to Paris, purged of Sansculottism, he found that his factory had been destroyed; but from the ruins sprang a finer, and for nearly thirty years he presided over it and saw that nothing that was not perfect was allowed to pass from it into any fob. His workmen were the best to be obtained, and Breguet had the pleasant and stimulating habit, when they presented their accounts, of adding a tail to the final 0 of the amount and thus awarding a nine-

franc prize for merit. It was perhaps not purely kind-heartedness, but a necessary piece of tactics, for during Breguet's absence some of his assistants had set up in rivalry, and were imitating his methods too closely—but never so closely as really to take in the connoisseur. Even at this day there is something about the early Breguet watches that is inimitable. For one thing, the secret of the amalgam that he put into the silver of his watch-faces was never discovered: but, more important still, there is genius. Breguet was as much an independent genius as, say, Corot, and his watches are as full of personality as Corot's landscapes.

In 1807, Breguet took his son Louis Antoine into partnership and the watches were then often signed "Breguet et Fils." Breguet the elder died in 1823, and in 1833, when Louis Antoine retired, his son Louis Clément François succeeded. The last of the Breguets was Louis Antoine, who died in 1882, and with him the great days of the firm passed. This last Breguet was a mechanic of genius who is believed to have worked for Graham Bell on the first telephones. A Rue de Breguet preserves the original Breguet's fame. It is near the Quai de l'Horloge, where, at 51, Breguet's first known shop stood. Later he moved to the Rue de la Paix. The business, which now belongs to

Monsieur Henry Brown, is carried on to-day at 2, Rue Edouard VII and all the old records may be consulted there. If you are so fortunate as to own an original Breguet watch and let M. Brown know the number, he will tell you its history. I was talking with him only the other day. . . .

After returning to Paris, Breguet became watch-maker to Napoleon and to the other Buonapartes, while in England his fame was bright. George III went to Breguet for the time of day and so did the Prince Regent. The Duke of Wellington gave three thousand guineas for a Breguet and always wore it. In fact it was bad form for many years to learn the hour from any but a Breguet watch. And no wonder, for, as Sir David says, "To carry a fine Breguet watch is to feel that you have the brains of a genius in your pocket." If it were so then, when the supply was comparatively ample, what must the feeling be now, when the great Breguet is dust and only by good fortune can an example of his work be lighted upon? Surely at this day those few who are privileged to learn how late it is with the assistance of one of these silver-faced monitors, under a velvety glass, may be said to constitute a separate order of aristocracy? At least, we think so.

THE TAIL AND THE SOUVENIRS

OBSERVANT Londoners, asked to name the most poignant visual loss inflicted upon them by the War, might differ; but I have no doubt whatever that a majority would agree as to the privation caused them by the wooden huts which for too long a time occupied the St. James's Park lake and shut out the evening view of the enchanted gables and towers and spires of Whitehall Court. That, on the grand scale. On a lower plane I personally should name the obliteration of a certain landmark in the same saint's adjacent square—the effacement being caused by the Washington Inn, which for three or four years surrounded and absorbed it.

But it now waves as proudly and assertively as ever—the tail of the King William's bronze charger.

It is not an ordinary tail, it is a tail beyond all tails and it was grievous to lose it. "You once," wrote (to Macready) Charles Dickens, wishing to cut a swell figure at a wedding in borrowed plumes, "you once gave the world assurance of a waistcoat." Similarly this steed

bestridden by the Anglo-Batavian monarch gives the world assurance of a caudal appendage. For never was such a tail. It springs vehemently like a pennon from the creature's stern, due south, and then droops voluptuously away. You see the steed, royal rider, and the superb additament, in profile, all the way before you as you walk from the Haymarket westwards, along the street where people wait so long and patiently in queues for the privilege of seeing Mr. Oscar Asche in (practically) the buff.

On looking into history I find that this magnificent tail—the creation of the sculptor John Bacon the younger—has graced the square ever since 1808. I find also that there was once water in the middle of the square, with pleasure boats upon it, and that it was into this lake that the Gordon Rioters in 1780 flung the key of Newgate Prison. A century earlier the square was a duelling ground, while as recently as 1773 a highwayman held up Sir Francis Holburne and his sisters in their coach as they passed through on their way from the opera, and pressing his pistol to Miss Holburne's breast demanded her purse.

During the War the collecting of relics was a very popular hobby and no family any longer respected itself unless it had a projectile as a

door-stop, a paper-knife made of the copper binding of a shell-case flattened out and shaped, and a cartridge pencil. To what extent these treasures are now valued I cannot say; I refer to them merely as prefatory matter to No. 2, St. James's Square, where Admiral Edward Boscawen once resided, and to draw attention to the kind of war souvenir that that sea ravener affected. For whereas we were, so to speak, retail in our acquisitiveness, he was wholesale. Where we were content with ammunition, he demanded the guns themselves, five of which, from the battle of Finisterre in 1747, may still be seen in a row before his house. From two of them sprout lamp posts.

One may pass No. 2 a thousand times, on one's way to call on the Bishop of London or lunch at the Sports Club or change a book at the London Library, and never give a thought to these five half-buried pieces of heavy ordnance; but that is their history, and their captor (under Anson) was this same "Wry-necked Dick" or "Old Dreadnought," as the Admiral was called, who brought back with him not only the Frenchman's guns but also a wound in his shoulder.

His seems to me a very thorough way of making war: first to defeat your foe and then to adapt his artillery to your own domestic pur-

poses. It is also almost scripturally pacific. A sword becomes a ploughshare with less ease than a cannon becomes the socket for a gas standard, as any one can see for himself by visiting No. 2, St. James's Square.

The admiral who resided behind this strange palisade was perhaps rather a fortunate than a great sailor; he was never a commander of such genius that his supersession in the middle of a war was inevitable; but he had a victory or so to his name, in particular the defeat of De la Clue—largely the result of a short way with treaties—in Lagos Bay in 1759, and he was able to build himself a country mansion at Hatchlands Park in Surrey "at the expense of the enemies of his country," which must always be a pleasant thing for a fighting man to do.

But his memory is chiefly prized in the Navy for his efforts to make it a more civilized service than he found it. Many of the hygienic precautions and comforts of crews to-day originated in the humane activity of "Wry-necked Dick," a name deriving from his habit of carrying his head on one side, or "Old Dreadnought," a title which seems to have been conferred, when he was still young, in honour of his reply, one night, when he was awakened by an officer with the question, "Sir, there are two large ships which look like Frenchmen bearing down on us,

what are we to do?" "Do?" said Boscawen, "damn them, fight them!" One is warned, however, that this story, since it stops short at that point, may be apocryphal, no engagement being on record. But the five half-buried cannon in front of No. 2, St. James's Square, are real enough.

I find also that in St. James's Square many illustrious men have dwelt, one house (No. 10) having in its day sheltered three Prime Ministers—Pitt, Derby, and Gladstone; but not, as the old lady reading the tablet wondered, all at once. But what are three Prime Ministers in one house compared with the tail of the horse of William III? That, as I hold, is the square's chief distinction.

THE BLUE RURITANIA

A STORY IN DOCUMENTS

Nancy Grinlay to her brother John Grinlay, B.A., a master at St. Austell's School at Eastbourne

DEAREST JACK,—The doctors have been and have gone again, and their verdict is that Dad must not on any account spend this winter in England. It is what we expected, but that does not make the problem of how to pay for a home in a warm climate any simpler. Sir Reston Chaynge wants Algeciras, and Dad would like that, too; but how can it be managed without borrowing? What do you say?

Your loving

NAN

John Grinlay to his sister

Dearest Nan,—We must not let anything stand in the way of Dad's recovery; but we'll keep off borrowing as long as possible. I will set my wits to work and try and devise a plan to make a little money. Meanwhile, you should go to Cook's and find out about the probable

expense of the journey and the hotel, etc. I shan't be happy until he is safely there, under the sun.

Yours,
JACK

John Grinlay to the Editor of "The Friday Review." (One of many similar letters)

Dear Sir,—I am sending you a selection of essays and verses, some at any rate of which I hope you may find suitable for your columns. If nothing among them should be of any use, perhaps you may like my style sufficiently to commission an article?

I am,
Yours faithfully,
JOHN GRINLAY, B.A.

The Editor of "The Friday Review" to John Grinlay Esq., B.A. (One of many similar letters)

The Editor of *The Friday Review* presents his compliments to Mr. Grinlay and regrets that he can find no place for the enclosed contributions. He would point out that a stamped envelope should accompany all unsolicited MSS.

John Grinlay to his sister

Dearest Nan,—No luck yet; but are we

downhearted? No. We still won't think about borrowing until I have tried various other means.

Yours,
JACK

From "The Evening Dawn"

SENSATIONAL CUP FINISH
ANOTHER OUTSIDER WINS
33 TO 1 CHANCE

Another upset for the knowing ones has to be recorded on the tablets of Turf history. Not a single authority gave Stumer for the Beaufort Cup to-day, yet the son of Burin and Banksia romped in with the greatest ease at the very useful price of 33 to 1. Talk about winter's keep! The lucky ones who were on him, among whom I am told was that excellent High Court judge and judge of racing, Lord Westinghouse, will have made their keep not only for this winter but for next summer too. Now that it is all over and it is easy to be wise about it, there are reasons enough why Stumer should have won, remembering his excellent effort at Sandown in the summer, when he ran second to the lightly weighted Boiler Plate . . . etc., etc.

Nancy Grinlay to her brother John

Dear Jack,—I have got all the figures now. For Dad and me—and of course he can't be alone or I would willingly save my part of the expense by staying here and getting a job—it can't be done, from December to April, under £140. That is just travelling and *pension*, leaving nothing for odd, unexpected things—a doctor, say, medicine, wine, drives, and so forth. It's a lot; but we have got to do it. Possibly we might find a tenant for our rooms?

Yours,

NAN

John Grinlay to his friend Henry Thurston

Dear Old Man,—I see there's a filly running at Derby to-morrow called Salubrity by Anchor out of Winter Sunshine. I want you to put the enclosed fiver on her, because it seems to me a heaven-sent tip. You see, my poor old Governor has been ordered south for the cold weather, and we naturally want him to get all right again, and there you have the whole thing. Our hope (Anchor) is that through Winter Sunshine at Algeciras he may recover his health (Salubrity). You must know some one who bets and who will do this for me. I have never backed a horse in my life before, but this looks good enough and the money for the Governor's

trip has got to be found somewhere. Why not let the bookies provide it?

Yours,
JACK

From "The Evening Dawn"

Also ran: Salubrity.

Henry Thurston to John Grinlay

My dear Ass,—Here is your fiver. I did not put it on, and you will doubtless be as glad as I am, now that you have seen the result. That is neither the way to select a winner nor to raise money for paternal jaunts.

Yours,
H.

The Editor of "The Weekly Post" to John Grinlay, Esq., B.A. (One of many similar letters)

The Editor of *The Weekly Post* thanks Mr. John Grinlay for his contribution, but is unable to find room for it and therefore returns it.

From "The Daily Réveille"

Our "Security-Tip" again turned up yesterday, for the fifth time in succession, and those of my readers who do me the honour to follow me must be very happy. Any one risking a

fiver both ways each day since the flat season commenced is now £93 7*s.* 6*d.* in pocket.

John Grinlay to Henry Thurston

My dear Harry,—Your caution was useful and I am grateful to you for exercising it. All the same, I am quite sure that there is money to be made on the Turf if one only keeps one's head and studies form. As I have simply got to raise a certain sum quickly, I am going to have a flutter, and shall be glad if you will tell me of a decent firm to bet with. If you don't know yourself, any one at your club will tell you. *The Daily Réveille's* racing man has been having a wonderful run of luck lately, and I shall probably follow him. After all, he is paid to know his subject and has been carefully picked by his editor.

Yours,

JACK

Henry Thurston to John Grinlay

My dear Jack,—Don't be a fool. Betting is a mug's game, even when one can afford to lose, which you cannot. Besides, schoolmasters mustn't gamble. And you must remember that form is at the mercy of all kinds of conditions and accidents, of which the racing journalist too often knows little and the great public nothing. The very fact that the men who study

it also want tips is a proof of its uncertainty.

I dropped out of the way of getting tips years ago, and when I got them they were rarely any good.

Most of the Turf commission-agents who advertise are probably straight enough. They will all be equally glad to let you maintain their women and children. But I wish you would be sensible and keep off it.

Yours,
HENRY

John Grinlay to Henry Thurston

Dear Harry,—Your letter doesn't absolutely convince me. I am aware, of course, that the odds are against the backer, but form does mean something in the long run, even though it is often upset; and, after all, one horse in each race must come in first. I am not likely to become a regular gambler, but just at the moment I mean to try my luck.

Yours,
JACK

John Grinlay to Messrs. Angle & Webb, Turf Accountants

Dear Sirs,—I should like to open an account with you. I enclose references.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN GRINLAY

Messrs. Angle & Webb to John Grinlay, Esq.

Dear Sir,—We have pleasure in adding your name to our list of clients. We enclose our book of rules, which include a telegraphic code, and we have registered your *nom de plume* for betting purposes as "Sanguine."

We are,
Yours faithfully,
ANGLE & WEBB

From "The Daily Réveille"
TO-DAY'S SECURITY-TIP
Tantivy. Each way

Telegram from John Grinlay to Messrs. Angle & Webb

Tantivy spot lantern Sanguine.

(Decoded, this means "£5 each way on Tantivy. JOHN GRINLAY.")

From "The Evening Dawn"

Also ran: Tantivy.

From "The Daily Réveille"

High among the November Cup probables for the careful investor to keep an eye on is Tortoise. This speedy son of Excursion Train and

Crustacean looked a picture when I saw him in his gallop yesterday morning. I should advise a liberal investment each way, with perhaps more for a place than to win. Tom Helix, Tortoise's trainer, has the deepest confidence in the colt.

John Grinlay to his sister Nancy

My dear Nan,—I have no good news yet, but I am hoping for a substantial cheque at the end of the week. I am doing a little investing.

Yours,

JACK

Telegram from John Grinlay to Messrs. Angle & Webb

Tortoise ring stretcher knock ambulance Sanguine.

(Decoded, this means, "£30 on Tortoise to win and £70 for a place.")

From "The Evening Dawn"

Also ran: Tortoise.

John Grinlay to Henry Thurston

Dear Old Man,—Peccavi! I wish I had taken your advice, for I am now badly down. No doubt a winner at a big price awaits me, but I have lost my nerve. Not only have I no luck

myself, but I have brought bad luck to others. The *Réveille* man hasn't had one "Security" winner since I began to follow him!

The point now is, can you lend me £200? Any interest you like.

Yours,
JACK

Henry Thurston to John Grinlay

My dear Jack,—I am very sorry, but you have hit upon my worst time. Not only have I no spare money at all, but I also am in debt, although not through gambling. I am frightfully sorry.

Yours,
H.

Ronald Maberley, at school at St. Austell's, to Mr. Thomas Blissett, merchant, an old friend of the family

Dear Uncle Tom,—Can you send me some foreign stamps? Most of the fellows here collect them, and I should like to. I expect you have lots of letters from abroad. I kicked a goat yesterday. Chemistry is awful fun.

Yours affectionately,
RONALD

Mr. Thomas Blissett to Ronald Maberley

My dear Ronald,—*In re* foreign stamps. I

find that all our envelopes are thrown away. But it chances that a little while ago I received from abroad the effects of an old friend who died last year in Burma, and who left all his little property to me, having no one else to leave it to. Among the things is the accompanying stamp-album, which I am sending on to you hoping that it will form the nucleus (see dictionary) of a collection. I will tell my clerk in future to tear all stamps off foreign letters and keep them for you. I should like you to preserve the album intact and merely add to it from time to time.

As a subscriber to the R.S.P.C.A. I have to express my regret that you kicked a goat. We should be merciful to poor dumb animals.

Yours sincerely,
"Uncle Tom"

Messrs. Angle & Webb to John Grinlay

Dear Sir,—We must again remind you that the sum of £155 is still due to us. Our rules are that settlements must be made every Monday, and this amount has been owing for some time. Unless you can let us have a cheque by the first of the month we shall be forced to take steps.

We are,
Yours faithfully,
Angle & Webb

Ronald Maberley to Mr. Thomas Blissett

Dear Uncle Tom,—Thanks awfully. The album looks ripping. We are to have a half-holiday to-morrow because the Head's wife has another baby. It is a pity none of the other masters are married. I am sorry my writing is so rotten. I didn't mean I had kicked a goat, but a goal. I must have crossed the *l* by mistake.

Yours affectionately,

RONALD

John Grinlay to Henry Thurston

Dear Harry,—There is no one to turn to but you. I owe those bookies £155 and they're cutting up rough. If it were known here I should get the boot at once. If you can't help me yourself, can you find me a firm of money-lenders?

Yours in despair,

JACK

Henry Thurston to John Grinlay

Dear Jack,—I don't know what to advise. It's 1,000 to 1 against any of those note-of-hand-loans-to-any-amount Johnnies lending money to a junior master in a private school.

When the time comes they want security, and what can you give?

Yours,

H.

Ronald Maberley to Mr. Thomas Blissett

Dear Uncle Tom,—One of the masters here, Mr. Grinlay, wants to buy the stamp-album, but I told him I must ask you first. He seems awfully keen on it. He might give a pound, I expect or even more, and that would buy several things I want, and get me out of debt to a boy who sold me his fountain pen. I owe two shillings for tuck too. I know you hate people being in debt. Besides, I don't believe I shall ever be able to get a really good collection of stamps.

Yours affectionately,

RONALD

John Grinlay to Messrs. Angle & Webb

Dear Sirs,—I hope you will give me another fortnight. I have the prospect of receiving quite a large sum of money in a few days' time, when you shall instantly be paid in full. It could do yourselves no good to take what you call steps, because they would only reduce my chances of repayment. If I have not paid it has been because there is no money, not be-

cause I was trying to evade it. I enclose a cheque for £5 on account, and am,

Yours faithfully,

J. GRINLAY

Ronald Maberley to Mr. Thomas Blissett

Dear Uncle Tom,—I have told Mr. Grinlay what you said, and he is very disappointed. Would you mind very much if I let him have just one stamp for his collection? He is very keen, and he says that it would make up a set. As he has been collecting for so long, and I am just beginning, I don't like to refuse. Besides, he is awfully decent to me, and yesterday got me let off an imposition. But I don't want to do anything against your wishes. All the other boys are always swapping stamps.

Yours affectionately,

RONALD

John Grinlay to Mr. Bennett, Dealer in Postage Stamps

Dear Sir,—Please let me know what you would give for a blue Ruritania in perfect condition. I must have some kind of estimate at once; otherwise I shall offer it elsewhere. I am giving you the first chance.

Yours faithfully,

J. GRINLAY

Mr. Bennett to J. Grinlay, Esq., B.A.

Dear Sir,—I should have to see the specimen before I made an offer, but if it were in perfect condition it would be worth to me somewhere about £300.

I am,
Yours faithfully,
W. S. Bennett

Thomas Blissett to Ronald Maberley

My dear Ronald,—I don't want you to sell anything in that collection. It belonged to a great friend of mine, and I passed it on to you to keep, not to part with or break up. If you have lost interest in stamps return it to me.

I enclose two ten-shilling notes for your liabilities. Not only do I disapprove of your being in debt, but even more of your getting into it. The only thing to do if you cannot afford a thing you want is to—do without.

Yours sincerely,
"Uncle Tom"

Dr. Severus, Head Master of St. Austell's, to Claude Maberley, Esq.

Dear Mr. Maberley,—I am writing to you concerning a rather curious case that has arisen. As I passed this evening on my rounds among the boys, during their after-supper recreation

hour, as is my custom, I was interested to see your boy busy with a stamp album—stamps just now being all the rage here. I looked at it for a while with him—Ronald is, I may say, a very intelligent boy, and we are all exceedingly pleased with him—and was amazed to find that what I had at first supposed to be a facsimile of the very rare blue Ruritania was in reality a genuine specimen, worth, I suppose, three or four hundred pounds. On my asking him how he obtained it, he said that Mr. Blissett, an old friend of the family, whom he calls Uncle Tom, sent the album to him as a gift. Thinking that you might like to inquire as to Mr. Blissett's wish to part—probably all unconsciously—with so valuable a treasure, and also with a view to greater safety, I took the album away with me and shall keep it in my charge.

With kind regards to Mrs. Maberley, in which Mrs. Severus joins,

Believe me,
Yours sincerely,
THEODORE SEVERUS

Claude Maberley to Thomas Blissett

My dear Tom,—You have been making a donkey of yourself. You have sent Ronald a stamp-album containing a genuine blue Ruri-

tania, one of the scarcest things in the world, and Heaven knows what else besides. For greater safety, the Head Master has locked it up. Tell me what you want done about it.

Yours,
CLAUDE

Dr. Severus to Mr. Claude Maberley

Dear Mr. Maberley,—I am sorry to say that something very unsatisfactory has occurred, which to a certain extent stultifies my letter to you of last evening. I said then that I was putting Ronald's album in safe keeping, but my precautions were insufficient, for to-day we have discovered that the blue Ruritania stamp is missing from it. Ronald can throw no light on the mystery. He says that the only person who has taken any interest in the album is one of my staff, Mr. Grinlay, a collector himself, who cannot assist me with any theory to-day as he has gone to town on urgent business. When he returns we must put our heads together and go into the whole matter. I take it that you would like me to inform the police?

I am,
Yours sincerely,
THEODORE SEVERUS

Dr. Severus to Claude Maberley

Telegram

No need for further action. Stamp was replaced in album during night. Suspect practical joke.

SEVERUS

John Grinlay to Messrs. Angle & Webb

Dear Sirs,—Cheque enclosed to discharge your a/c.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN GRINLAY

John Grinlay to his sister Nancy

Telegram

Don't worry any more. Am sending cheque to cover whole trip.

JACK

John Grinlay to Henry Thurston

Dear Old Man,—I have had a stroke of luck and I am all straight once more. But never again! No one will ever know what I've been through.

Yours,
JACK

Dr. Severus to Claude Maberley

Dear Mr. Maberley,—In explanation of my telegram, let me say that all is well, although

a certain mystery still attaches to the matter. When I came to examine the album the next day I found to my astonishment that the missing stamp was again in its place. My wife suggests that I had imagined the loss; but that the whole affair is an hallucination on my part I cannot admit. On the other hand, it would, I feel, do no good in the school if further publicity were given to it.

Yours sincerely,
THEODORE SEVERUS

Thomas Blissett to Claude Maberley

My dear Claude,—I was away when your letter came, or should have replied sooner. In the words of some eminent man or other, "What I have given, I have given"; and therefore the album is as much Ronald's now as if it had been worthless. What I should like is for it to be valued by an expert and sold, and the proceeds to be invested for the boy. Perhaps you will arrange this?

Yours,
TOM

Claude Maberley to Dr. Severus

Dear Dr. Severus,—My friend Blissett has very sportingly decided that the stamp-album shall be Ronald's, no matter what its worth, and

he wishes it to be sold and the proceeds invested. Will you then kindly let me have it for valuation?

We are glad you think so highly of Ronald.

Believe me,
Yours sincerely,
CLAUDE MABERLEY

Claude Maberley to Messrs. Carstairs

Dear Sirs,—I understand that you are our leading stamp-experts, and shall be glad to have your valuation of the accompanying album, which I wish to sell.

I am,
Yours faithfully,
CLAUDE MABERLEY

Messrs. Carstairs, Postage Stamp Experts, to Claude Maberley, Esq.

Dear Sir,—We have examined the album and value it at £240. Kindly let us know what you wish done in the matter.

We are,
Yours faithfully,
CARSTAIRS & Co.

Claude Maberley to Messrs. Carstairs

Dear Sirs,—I confess to being surprised by your valuation, because I have been given to understand that the collection contains a blue

Ruritania, which alone should be worth between three and four hundred pounds.

I am,
Yours faithfully,
CLAUDE MABERLEY

Messrs. Carstairs to Claude Maberley, Esq.

Dear Sir,—In reply to yours of the 5th inst. we would point out that the blue Ruritania stamp in your album is a facsimile and not a genuine specimen. If it were genuine the value of the collection would be £590. Awaiting your instructions we are,

Yours faithfully,
CARSTAIRS & Co.

Claude Maberley to Thomas Blissett

Dear Tom,—Life is a fraud, a sham, a hollow mockery, and dishonesty is the world's principal industry. Reduced to plain black and white, these sentiments mean that the blue Ruritania stamp is not a genuine one at all, worth at least £350, but a counterfeit worth nothing. Your poor friend who owned the album was deceived, and Dr. Severus, Ronald's dominie, seems to have been deceived, too. The rest of the collection is good enough to fetch £240, but the diamond of great price, the most dazzling jewel of the crown, turns out to be paste. At

the moment I am doing nothing more about it and Ronald thinks only of birds' eggs.

Yours,
CLAUDE

From the Personal Column of "The Times"

Advertiser wishes to buy a genuine blue Ruritania stamp. Price must be named in reply. Write Box K, No. 321 *The Times* Office.

Mr. Bennett to Box K, No. 321, "Times" Office

Dear Sir,—In reply to your advertisement I can offer you a blue Ruritania, perfect example, for £370.

I am,
Yours faithfully,
W. S. BENNETT

Mr. Thomas Blissett to Mr. Bennett

Dear Sir,—I will call upon you to go into the matter of the blue Ruritania to-morrow (Thursday) at 4.30.

Yours faithfully,
Box K, No. 321.

Thomas Blissett to John Grinlay, Esq., B.A.

If Mr. Grinlay will ask for Mr. Holmes at the Junior Carlton Club on Thursday next at

three o'clock, he will hear of something to his advantage.

John Grinlay to Henry Thurston

Dear Old Man,—I've had the most intriguing anonymous letter (which I enclose) and shall get leave to come up and see the unknown benefactor. I count on you to lunch with me first.

Yours,

JACK

Thomas Blissett to Claude Maberley

Dear Claude,—You had better sell the album and add to the amount the cheque I am enclosing for £370. This represents the value of the blue Ruritania stamp which was in it when I sent the book to Ronald. I have told you, "What I have given, I have given."

Having some suspicion as to what had happened, I have been doing a little amateur sleuthing, and yesterday drew a full confession from the culprit and a promise from him—which he will keep—to refund by degrees. I will not tell you more than that Ronald's respected Head Master (if you ever suspected him) is as innocent as my knee. The guilty party was guilty only through despair, and is never likely to go wrong again. Nor am I likely ever more to

give schoolboys stamp-albums that have not been examined first by experts.

Yours,

Tom

John Grinlay to Harry Thurston

Dear Old Man,—I can't tell you what happened, after all. I am bound to secrecy. I can only say that if there is a gentleman in the world it is the member of the Junior Carlton who calls himself Mr. Holmes. I am so happy I don't know what to do.

Yours ever,

Jack

SIGNS AND AVOIRDUPOIS

LOOKING out of the train window on the Great Eastern the other day I caught sight of an inn called "The Safety Valve," and the novelty of the name set me reflecting on signboards generally and, in particular, their decay as an index to current events. This one with the unexpected appellation might, of course, have been christened in fun, but more likely was so called to associate it with the neighbouring lines of metal and the iron horses that career up and down them. I shall, probably, never know. If I am right and it came into being with steam engines, we have approximately its date, just as, with more certainty, we know when "The Waterloo Arms" was opened. But signboards are historians no longer, or rather, history no longer can count on them as an ally.

It is possible that no new inns are ever built in these days of grandmotherly legislation. I should not be surprised. The publican has been treated in late years with such studied unfairness that one does not see his trade luring many recruits. As to the humiliation which an

ordinary thirsty Englishman has far too long been feeling, in the coils of petty restrictions and prohibitions, I prefer to say nothing; one must keep cool. But if any new inns do come into existence I have no notion what they are called. All that I know is that I have never seen a contemporary sign. I have never seen a "King George's Head" with the features of our own monarch on the sign; I have never seen a "Queen's Head" with the features of Queen Mary; I have only once, and that was in Norfolk, seen a "Prince of Wales's Head" with the features of the most popular young man in the world. There are plenty of "King's Heads" and "Queen's Heads" all over the country, but they were built during previous reigns. There is a "George" in every old town, but the George so honoured is either I, II, III, or IV, and most probably III.

Nor does the nomenclature of our hostelries keep pace with the changes of the road. There are "Four in Hands" all over the country; "The Coach and Horses" is a common sign. So are "The Horse Shoe," "The Horse and Groom," "The White Horse," "The Black Horse." But I know of no "Motorist's Arms," no "Jolly Shovers" (even though Shovers aren't jolly), no "Spark and Plug," no "Tyre and Hooter." Bricklayers have "Arms" every-

where, but I have never seen Lorrymen similarly provided, and yet for every ten bricklayers to-day there must be a driver of a heavy motor wagon. "Cricketers' Arms" are dotted about England, but no one ever saw "The Golfers' Arms." And so on. At a certain moment all effort to give inns signs of the times seems to have died out.

I am not made permanently unhappy by the lapse; but I have one very serious suggestion to put before every landlord and every brewery with tied houses, and that is that when next the time comes for re-painting the façade of their inns, the name of the town or village shall always be added to the sign. For some reason or other it has been decided that a profound secret shall be made of the identity of English towns and villages. In France—at any rate in the Department of the Marne—a notice is fixed to the first and last house of every village, giving not only its own name, but the name of its nearest neighbour on the road. And here and there in England the Automobile Association has done something similar. In Surrey, for example. But it is sporadic, for there are no such signs everywhere, and even in Surrey I noticed recently that the boys with nothing to do on Sunday afternoons—honest public games being, in our Puritan folly, forbidden, although

the voices of lawn-tennis players are heard in every private garden—have thrown stones at the enamel until most of the words have been obliterated.

The result is that if, while motoring in most parts of England, you miss the post office you miss the name of the place altogether; and the post office is often a retired cottage. Sign-posts might help if chauffeurs would allow you to read them, but it is a cardinal tenet of the chauffeur's faith to forbid such frivolity. If, however, the sign-board of "The Five Bells" at Bullingham comprised the word Bullingham all would be simple. Let Boniface do what no county council or rural or urban authority deems necessary. I was driven the other day from London to Rye by one route, and back by another, and was completely at a loss except where a post office could be discovered, and in the process of looking for the post office the beauty or interest of the place had to be sacrificed.

But I must not pretend that when I enter a motor car I am ever under the delusion that I am going to see the country. I know only too well that the car is not the friend of the seeker after beauty. He who wants to know anything of the charm of England must be his own master, and no one who meddles with petrol is that.

He must be able to stop at will and lean on gates, to turn aside into footpaths, even to retrace his steps.

Now and again it has been suggested by some sanguine innovator—a poet with the backward look or an architect not so overburdened with commissions as to be yet mercenary—that the sign-board shall be revived in London. Although belonging to neither of these groups, I am as strongly in favour of it; for the sign can be a very attractive thing, gay or grave in colour and simple or fantastic in design, and a hundred of them hanging out from their bars at odd altitudes would make our streets amusing and picturesque. Trade also should follow this form of flag. But the reform tarries or is left to tea shops and such little odd concerns as flourish (or not) in single rooms in South Moulton Street, where there are more signs, for its length, than, I believe, in any London thoroughfare.

Were the board to come back, one of the pleasantest old world signs would be that of the "Coffee Mill," which would be seen merrily flaunting itself a few yards from the foot of St. James's Street on the left as you descend the hill; for it is the original style of that ancient wine office at No. 3 which you may have noticed even if you never have entered it: a dark som-

bre house of business, externally, with a side front on the little backwater known as Pickering Place, which still defies the march of progress but has not recaptured its popularity either as a gaming centre, as it was in the eighteenth century, when it was called Pickering Court, or as a duelling ground.

Pickering Place owes its name to the worthy tea and tobacco merchant who was its principal resident, and it was his business—at the sign of the "Coffee Mill"—which came in time into the hands of the present occupiers of No. 3 St. James's Street, Messrs. Berry Brothers & Co.; but they, relinquishing their predecessor's versatility, pin their faith solely to those generous juices which America has latterly repudiated. England also, it is said, may follow suit, but at the sign of the "Coffee Mill" scepticism as to this revolution thrives and withers are unwrung. It is not however of wine that I would write, but of avoirdupois. Men of weight.

Surprising things happen in London so often that gradually the element of surprise disappears, and it is only a question of time for us to be prepared for all. A recent metropolitan discovery of mine—which I might have made
✗ thirty years before, if the clock had struck—is that at the sign of the "Coffee Mill" in St. James's Street is a pair of scales on which, for

fully a century and a half, all that was most eminent in human form has sat to be weighed, and is still sitting; and that ever since the year 1765 accurate records of illustrious and often regal ponderosity have been kept. It was absurd to have lived in London since 1892 and to have learned this only in 1920; but that illustrates both the tangle of caprice which (for want of a better word) we call life, and the inexhaustibility of our city.

"If you want to know how much Charles Lamb weighed in 1814, I can tell you the way to find out"—it was that casual remark which put me at last on the scent; and now I can supply devout Elians with the information that in 1814, when he was thirty-nine, their divinity turned the scale, in his boots, at 9 stone, 3 lb.; or almost a stone more than I was expecting after so much evidence as to his "immaterial" form. But his boots may have been very heavy.

Having made the start I continued investigations, with the assistance of an analysis of the book which one of the partners has made. Keeping to literature I discovered that Lord Byron, whom we know to have been sensitive about his bulk, was weighed many times, first in 1806, when he was living at No. 8, only five doors away. He was then 13 stone 12 lb. in

his boots. This result must have distressed exceedingly one who lived in fear of embonpoint, even to the drinking of vinegar and general mortification of the flesh. In 1807, in shoes only, he had got it down to 10 stone 13 lb., and in 1811, again in shoes, to 9 stone 11½ lb. Tom Moore, his Lordship's biographer, seems similarly to have decreased, for in 1807 he was 10 stone 6 lbs. and in 1809, 8 stone 13 lb. Another famous man who can also have had no wish to lose his figure, and who will go down to history as much for his insolent question as to the identity of the Prince Regent (with whom he had quarrelled) "Who's your fat friend?" as for his fastidiousness in ties, dwindled too. In 1798 he was 12 stone 4 lb., in boots; in 1811, 13 stone 10 lb. in boots and frock; and in 1815, 12 stone 10½ lb., in shoes. In 1815 the Beau's reign was nearing its end, for a year later he had to fly from his creditors to Calais. None the less there is still one more entry, in 1822, suggesting that he was able to visit the scenes of his old triumphs yet once again, and then he was 10 stone 13 lb. in boots. As for the fat friend, he was here many times. In 1791 he weighed 17 stone 4 lb., in boots; in 1798, 16 stone "after gout"; in 1800, 17 stone 9 lb. in hat and boots; and later that year,

16 stone 5 lb. "after gout"; in 1803, "with gout," 15 stone 8 lb.

Many of William Hickey's boon companions came to the "Coffee Mill" to be weighed, but there is no record of a visit by himself. The Earl of Peterborough, for example, who was one of the original members of the Dining Club of twenty—"the dinner to consist of every article procurable whether in or out of season": a good preparation for the "Coffee Mill's" scales. Thomas Creevey the diarist was on the heavy side: in 1808, 14 stone, and 1837, 15 stone 7 lb. Abraham Hayward was much lighter, being, in 1836, in boots, only 8 stone 2½ lb. Joseph Hume, the economist and Radical, before he was weighed laid aside his coat and his watch but retained his boots. Quite a number of the more particular clients stripped absolutely and had the doors closed, among them Lord Dunmore. Charles James Fox in 1773, in his boots, weighed 12 stone 8 lb.; in 1781, in shoes, 13 stone 12 lb. George Cruikshank was on the scales in 1826, but how the author of *The Bottle* and *The Triumph of Bacchus* could bring himself to enter this establishment I cannot understand. In 1826 he weighed 11 stone 2 lb., and in 1840, 9 stone 12½ lb. The Iron Duke is absent, but many illustrious soldiers are in the records, among them Sir John Moore,

12 stone 1 lb. in shoes in 1784, and 11 stone 11½ lb. in half boots in 1808; Sir Colin Campbell, 11 stone 6 lb. in 1827; and Captain Fred Burnaby, who was a giant, 14 stone 10½ lb.

The heaviest man who ever burdened the "Coffee Mill" scales was Mr. George Drummond who, in 1850, registered 25 stone 12 lb. But his negligible bulk compared with that of Mr. Bright of Maldon, who, at the age of twenty-nine, when he laid aside his panoply, weighed 44 stone. No visit of Mr. Bright to the "Coffee Mill" is recorded, but there is a print on the office wall depicting the wager between Mr. Codd and Mr. Hants, the bet being that seven men could be buttoned within Mr. Bright's waistcoat. It was easily won, on December 1, 1750, in the "Black Bull" at Maldon, kept at that time by the Widow Day. Whether there are any such colossi now I cannot say. Mr. Chesterton is, to the familiar press, the recognized example of heroic girth, and many are the jokes on the subject—such as his gallantry in standing in an omnibus to offer his seat to three ladies—but there is an element of myth in the whole affair. It is my privilege to know Mr. Chesterton, and I can assure those who do not that he is not so immense as all that—not, I mean, in body. In mind and sympathies, yes. Meanwhile, just to prove that an

pinguidity.

interest in amplitude and pinguidity still obtains, let me mention that I saw a Scotch paper the other day in which the proprietor of a Waxworks Exhibition advertised for a charwoman: "Must weigh over 20 stone. Wages £1 a day."

FOR OURSELVES ALONE

OUR hostess had taken us over to "Sheltered End," the pleasant country home of Mrs. Willoughby Brock, to play tennis. As, however, there was only one court, and quite a number of young and middle-aged people were standing near it with racquets in their hands and an expression on their faces in which frustration and anticipation fought for supremacy, it followed that other beguilements had to be found. My own fate was to fall into the hands of Mrs. Brock, whose greatest delight on earth seems to be to have a stranger to whom she can display the beauties of her abode and enlarge upon the unusual qualities of her personality.

She showed and told me all. We explored the estate, from the dog-kennel to the loggia for sleeping out "under the stars"; from the pergola to the library; from the sundial to the telephone, "the only one for miles"; and as we walked between the Michaelmas daisies in her long herbaceous borders, with Red Admiral butterflies among the myriad little clean purple and mauve blossoms, she said how odd it was that some people have the gift of attracting

friends and others not; and what a strange thing it is that where one person has to toil to make a circle, others are automatically surrounded by nice creatures; and asked me if I had any views as to the reason, but did not pause for the reply.

It was a warm mellow day—almost the first of summer, according to one's senses, although nearly the last, according to the calendar—and Mrs. Brock was so happy to be in a monologue that I could enjoy the garden almost without interruption. For a two and a half years' existence it certainly was a triumph. Here and there a reddening apple shone. The hollyhocks must have been ten feet high.

"Ah! here comes the dear Vicar," said Mrs. Brock suddenly, and, rising from a rose which I had stooped down to inhale (and I wish that people would grow roses, as they used to do years ago, nose-high), I saw a black figure approaching.

"He is such a charming man," Mrs. Brock continued, "and devoted to me."

"Good afternoon," said the Vicar. "How exquisite those delphiniums are!" he added after introductions were complete; "such a delicate blue! I should not have intruded had I known you had a party"—he waved his hand towards the single tennis-court, around which the wistful

racquet-bearers were now (as it seemed) some thousands strong, "but it is always a pleasure" —he turned to me—"to be able to walk in this paradise on a fine day and appreciate its colour and its fragrance. I find Mrs. Brock so valuable a parochial counsellor too."

"I think," I said, not in the least unwilling to be tactful, "I will see what the rest of our party are doing."

"Oh, no," said the Vicar; "please don't let me drive you away. As a matter of fact, since there are so many here I won't stay myself. But I wonder," he addressed Mrs. Brock, "as I am here, if I might use your telephone for a moment?"

"Of course," said she.

"Thank you so much," he replied; "yes, I know where it is," and with a genial and courtly salutation he moved off in the direction of the house.

"Such a true neighbour!" said Mrs. Brock. "Ah! and here is another," she went on. And along the same path, where the Michaelmas daisies were thickest, I saw a massive woman in white, like a ship in full sail, bearing down upon us, defending her head from the gentle September sun with a red parasol. "This," Mrs. Brock hurriedly informed me, "is Lady Cranstone, who lives in the house with the green

shutters at the end of the village. Such a dear person! She's always in and out. The widow of the famous scientist, you know."

I didn't know; but what did it matter?

By this time the dear person was within hailing distance, but she flew no signals of cordiality; her demeanour indeed struck me as austere and arrogant. Mrs. Brock hurried towards her to assist her to her moorings, and I was duly presented.

"I didn't intend to come in again to-day," said Lady Cranstone, whose features still successfully failed to give to the stranger any indication of the benignity that, it was suggested, irradiated her being.

"But you are always so welcome," said Mrs. Brock. "Lady Cranstone," she continued to me, "is kindness itself. She makes all the difference between loneliness and—and content."

Lady Cranstone picked a rose and pinned it in her monumental bosom. "I don't know that I had anything in particular to say," she remarked. "I chanced to be passing and I merely looked in; but since I am here perhaps you would allow me to use your telephone——"

Mrs. Brock expressed her delighted acquiescence and the frigate sailed on. "You've no idea," said Mrs. Brock, "what a friendly crowd there is in these parts. I don't know how it is,

but this little place of mine, modest though it is, and unassuming and unclever as I am, is positively the very centre of the district. It's like a club house. How strange life is! What curious byways there are in human sympathy!"

This being the kind of remark that is best replied to with an inarticulate murmur, I provided an inarticulate murmur; and I was about to make a further and more determined effort to get away when a maid-servant approached with a card.

Mrs. Brock took it and read the name with a little cry of satisfaction. "Lord Risborough," she said to me. "At last! How nice of him to call. They live at Risborough Park, you know. I always said they would never condescend to dignify 'Sheltered End' with their presence; but I somehow knew they would." She purred a little. And then, "Where is his lordship?" she asked; but the girl's reply was rendered unnecessary by the nobleman himself, who advanced briskly upon Mrs. Brock, hat in hand.

"I trust," he said, "that you will pardon the informality of this visit. Lady Risborough is so sorry not to have been able to call yet, but—but—— Yes, I was wondering if you'd be so very kind as to do me a little favour? The fact is our telephone is out of order—most annoy-

ing—and I wondered if you would let me use yours. I hear that you have one."

"I will take you to it," said Mrs. Brock.

"Most kind, most kind!" his lordship was muttering.

There was no difficulty in making my escape now.

ANOTHER "YOUNG CRICKETERS' TUTOR"

MOHUMMUD ABDULLAH KHAN'S Cricket Guide was published in Lucknow in 1891, the full title being *Cricket Guide intended for the use of Young Players, containing a Short but Comprehensive Account of the Game, embracing all the important Rules and Directions nicely arranged in due Succession.* The reason given by the Indian Nyren for putting forth this work was the wish to allay the fever which cricket seems then to have been provoking in his compatriots. Those who remember the *sang-froid,* the composed mastery, of Prince Ranjitsinhji may be surprised to learn that, at any rate in 1891, cricket had a way of rushing to young India's head. "Even those," wrote Mohummud Abdullah Khan, "who are very good and noble (say, next-door to angels) turn so rash and inconsiderate at certain moments that their brains lose the balance and begin to take fallacious fancies." More, they "boil over with rage, pick up quarrels with one another, and even look daggers at their own dearest friends and darlings," the cause being

not only the game itself, but an ignorance of the laws that should govern it and them, and without obedience to which "a human body is nothing but a solid piece of rocky hill, that is to say 'cleverness.'" Very well, then. Feeling as he did about it, Mohummud Abdullah Khan had no alternative but to write his book.

Practical as the instructions of this Oriental teacher can be, it is deportment that really lies nearest his heart. He is as severe on a want of seriousness as upon loss of temper. Thus, he says: "The fielders must take especial care not to exchange jokes with one another or try funny tricks that do secretly divide their attention and produce a horrible defect in their fielding." Again, "Behave like gentlemen after the game is over; avoid clapping and laughing in faces of the persons you have defeated." But there is no harm in a match being momentarily interrupted by a touch of courtesy. Thus: "If you are the Captain of your team and the fielders of the opposite party clap your welcome, you are required simply to turn or raise your night cap a little, and this is sufficient to prove your easy turn of disposition as well as to furnish the return of their compliments."

For the most part the directions are sound, even if they may be a little obscure in statement; but now and then one is puzzled. The

game in India must have been animated indeed if no error has crept into the following note on the bowler: "During one and the same over the bowler is allowed to change his ends as often as he may desire, but cannot possibly bowl two overs in succession." And this reads oddly: "The bowler is allowed to make the batsman stand in any direction he may choose from the wicket he is bowling from." But no fault can be found here: "The bowler must always try to pitch his ball in such a style and position that its spring may always rest on the wickets to be aimed at. He must know the proper rules of *no balls* and *wides* and"—here we are again! —"must never be wishing to pick up any quarrel with the umpire of the opposite party."

And so we reach the umpires, upon whom the author becomes very earnest. Under the frenetic conditions to which cricket could reduce his countrymen, to act as umpire was no joke. Indeed he goes so far as to advise the reader never to fill that position except when the match is between teams personally unknown to him. For to umpire among friends is to turn those friends to foes. "Take special care, my dear umpires, not to call *over* unless the ball has finally settled in the wicket-keeper's hand, as well as avoid ordering a batsman *out* unless you are appealed to by the opposite party. . . .

Each and every one of the umpires must avoid using insulting terms, or playing on bets with any one of the fielders or persons in general, in his capacity of being an umpire."

The requirements of a perfect wicket-keeper are well set forth. After describing his somewhat "stooping conditions" the mentor says, "I would like this man to be of a grave demeanour and humble mind, say the Captain of the Club, whose duties are to guide the fielders, order the change of their places if necessary," and "guard himself well against the furious attacks of the sweeping balls." Here Mohummud Abdullah Khan is among some of the best critics, who have always held that for the captain to be wicket-keeper (as, for example, in the case of Gregor MacGregor) is an ideal arrangement.

Point also needs some special qualities: "He must be a very smart and very clever man, of a quick sight and slender form." (Slender form? And yet one has seen "W. G." doing not so badly there!) "His place is in front of the popping-crease, about seven yards from the striker. He must take special care to protect his own person in case when fast bowling is raging through the field. Pay great attention to the game, my dear pointer, or suppose yourself already hurt."

ON BEING A FOREIGNER

AFTER living securely on one's own native soil for years and years, not without suspicion as to the sanity, cleanliness, morality, and general suitability of the inhabitants of all the other countries of the world, it is startling to set foot on alien ground and realize that one has suddenly become a foreigner oneself; that one is a kind of trespasser, a dweller elsewhere on sufferance; that one's own people, and (even more important) one's own vocabulary, are over there, behind. This is—or should be—one of those moments when we pause and take stock, overwhelmed by the thought, so impressive to Thomas Hood, "that even the little children speak French!" But different people, of course, act in different ways, and, while the humble will realize their foreignness and walk warily, the arrogant will do everything in their power to annex the new territory as their own and make its natives feel like outcasts and excrescences. The fury of a woman scorned I have seen reduced to meekness in comparison with the rage of a certain kind of traveller at loggerheads with a porter who has the effrontery to understand no language but his own.

That is a not too uncommon sight at Calais and Boulogne; and I have always thought it would be interesting to meet the same travellers on their way back and to see how they have improved—what being a foreigner has done for them. For there should be no state more instructive and, often, humiliating.

Dividing foreigners into the bad and the good, I should say—but first of all we must make up our minds as to what a good foreigner is. For example, there is a story of an English intolerant who, on hearing that a friend had returned from abroad in shattered health, remarked, "I've always said that abroad was a nasty place." Now this speaker could be described both as a very bad foreigner or a very good one, according as the case is considered. A good foreigner, you see, may equally be the alien who is most readily absorptive of the habits and customs of the country he is now in, or the alien who retains and guards the greatest number of native peculiarities and is proud of doing so. In the first case he would be a better emigrant than in the other, but as to his merits as a foreigner you pay your money and you take your choice. If we take the second group to be the more admirable—and in a way it must be so, for it is better to cherish personality than to see it blurred and misty, without definition—then the

French are among the best foreigners of all. Their reluctance to leave their country causes them, when they are forced to take the horrid step, to carry as much of it about with them as they can; to meet only their compatriots; to dine in restaurants where the cuisine is French; and to embrace every opportunity of not acquiring the language, or if, for reasons of diplomacy or commerce, it must be acquired, to cling passionately to their own accent. Englishmen have occasionally been found to speak French like a native, but no Frenchman ever spoke English in that way. It is not the Frenchman's fault; it is due to the way he is made. The problems of ethnology are indeed endless. The impossibility of a man living at Calais being able to pronounce even the simple monosyllable "No" like a man living twenty-one miles north of him, at Dover, is only one of thousands. It should have been enough for the Tower of Babel to confuse tongues; to go on to construct larynges incapable of reproducing one's neighbours' vowel sounds at all was gratuitous. Yet that is what happened. When an Englishman talks French like an Englishman the reason often enough is that he would die rather than subject his mouth to the undignified contortions that are necessary if any Gallic illusion is to be set up. To talk like a Frenchman would not

be an impossibility. But a Frenchman's vocal arrangements—the tone of his voice alone—are wholly incapable of being bent to the desired end. This, then, is one reason why the Frenchman is the best foreigner; but the principal reason is that he does not want to assimilate; he wants never to settle down, but eternally to be on the *qui vive* (his own phrase) to hear *la belle France* calling him back.

When we take the other meaning of "best" as applied to a foreigner—namely, the most successfully assimilative—the Englishman comes perhaps first, by reason of his willingness to live out of his own country, and of an inexhaustible curiosity that leads him to explorations which often provide him with a deeper knowledge of the adopted land than many of its own inhabitants possess, although, of course, only in spots. I don't think Americans make such good foreigners, in this sense, as the English; but there is no comparison between America and England in the capacity of the two countries to turn a foreigner into a citizen. It is America's large-hearted way to insist upon the aliens who reach her shores becoming Americans as quickly as possible, and the guests fall easily and naturally into line. But aliens in England come in for some very hard knocks in the House of Commons and in the Press, and, since the War, they

have effected a landing only with difficulty. There are reasons enough for this, but a single one is sufficient. England is a small country, not so big as the state of New York, and there simply isn't room for them. Those that have transplanted themselves there are always thinking about the blissful day when they can go home again. I don't say that they do go home; but they talk about going, plan for it, save up for it, and, I think, mean to depart. For years the staple of conversation between an Italian barber in London and myself has been his dream of ultimate retirement to Livorno, there to be happy among his *spaghetti* and *Chianti*, to sit outside the *café* under a trustworthy sun, where he will discuss politics and never give a glance to any *chevelure* or chin but his own. Very likely he will never go, and his bones will eventually be deposited in the Italian cemetery at Kensal Green; but to go is his hope and his desire. Yet it is conceivable that he will be happier to toy with the hope and defer its fulfilment.

One of the worst calamities that can come upon a man must be this: to live abroad for so long that when at last he returns to his own country he is a foreigner there. A worse calamity is not to want to return at all. There is usually something very wrong with a man whose

denationalization is wilful. To forswear one's own country is treachery.

But there can be such a thing as denationalization by force. I was hearing the other day of an American of distinguished attainments who for so long has been domiciled in Switzerland that he has become a new Philip Nolan—a man without a country. America, it appears, insists on the periodical return of her sons to the motherland if they are to retain the privilege of family membership; and it is more than fifty years since this scholar and Alpinist was at home.

Do the Italians in America feel the same nostalgia as my friend, I wonder, or are they all Americans? Those that I met in New York, in the district just below Washington Square, seemed contented enough, and to be in their restaurants was to feel perfectly at Rome; but more than one of them confessed that the loss of the *vino* was making the exile distasteful in a new way.

I have said that the English become willing foreigners, but the Scotch go beyond willingness —they are eager to emigrate. Doctor Johnson had always something caustic at his tongue's end to say on this subject, but the famous couplet by Cleveland is the deadliest commentary:

Had Cain been Scot, God would have changed his doom:
Not forced him wander, but condemned him home.

Still, it is neither the English nor the Scotch who are the best foreigners in our first sense of the word best. They live abroad and accommodate themselves among strange peoples, but they cannot forget the place of their birth. It may not be ever present in their minds, as it is with exiles from the fair land of France, but it is there. When, however, we come to the best foreigners of all this thought does not trouble; the Jews are undisturbed by ghosts from their native land. The Jews, having no country of their own, make whatever country they settle in theirs. Only one of them wanders; the rest establish themselves, prosper, and gradually become more American than the Americans, more English than the English, more French than the French.

With the English the art of becoming a foreigner is a more drastic matter than with a Frenchman or any other Continental. A Frenchman has merely to slip across the frontier between his country and his neighbours' to become a foreigner in Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, or Spain. If he chances to live near one of the borders, it may be an everyday occurrence for him. Even an American can

become a foreigner in Canada or Mexico without undergoing the torture of a sea crossing. But the English are doomed. The Englishman in order to become a foreigner must cross the sea, and this makes it an event. He thus has time not only to reflect upon what he is doing, but (when Britannia is ruling the waves indifferently well) to wish he had never set out on such a fool's errand at all.

That is the reason why an Englishman who wishes to become a foreigner for the safety of his own skin—a fugitive from justice—has so much more difficult a time than a Continental malefactor, or an American. For them there are so many obscure and unnoticeable ways of getting into another country and being lost, but the Englishman must resort to officials, and then, having obtained a passport, he must take a ship, and while he is doing this there is time for a description of him to be cabled in every direction. Now the catch about a ship is that you cannot leave it except by a gang-plank two feet wide. The world is a vast place, but it is continually narrowing down to gang-planks two feet wide stretched from decks to quays, with detectives at the shore end of them. This, perhaps, is why England is so moral a country.

Returning to virtue, I would put it on record, from my own experience, that there is a particu-

lar pleasure in being a foreigner in a country —such as America or Ireland—where the language is one's own. Half the joy of loitering in France and Italy has always been lost to me through inability to carry on wayside conversations. I can ask questions with any one, but nobody so successfully fails to understand the reply. But in Ireland, which is as foreign to an Englishman as any Latin country, I can talk all day and am delighted to do so. In America, too, I found myself able to exchange ideas with quite a number of its inhabitants. Now and then the native idiom was too much for me, but for the most part I could both be fluent and comprehend fluency. I have not found that good linguists are any cleverer or better informed than other people; and yet on the face of it a man who carries thirty living languages in his head should have more that is interesting to tell than a man who has conversed only with his own countrymen. But the truth is that linguistic ability is a branch of the art of mimicry, and mimics can be the dullest dogs when they are not impersonating others.

In spite of my conversational ease I felt that I had failed utterly—at any rate, with one individual—when a New York interviewer said of me that I resembled a typical American business man. Not that I have anything against

the American business man (whom I have admiringly watched being Napoleonic in his office and sat with, when he is tired, at some very amusing burlesques), nor have I any poignant reluctance to look like him; but I would rather have looked like myself, who, in too many respects besides wealth, am probably his very antipodes. None the less I would not be so idiosyncratic, so insular, as to be continually an object of remark, because the art of travel, on which so many foreigners are principally engaged, is to be more observing than observed. The highest compliment that can be paid to a foreigner is to be stopped in the street and asked the way by a native. Let him be content with that; even if he cannot answer the question, he has scored a point. But it will never happen to him if he retains too many of his distinguishing marks.

As a matter of fact, the number of Englishmen who resemble Americans beyond ordinary optical detection is very small. They may dress the part to perfection, but something will betray them—gait or posture or features—while in England most Americans reveal themselves instantly as such. We can pick out the Australians, too, in a moment.

It is the boast of most travellers that they are "citizens of the world," but the true citizen

of the world is very scarce. It is not enough to be able to order a good dinner in any language; which is the ordinary qualification. Moreover, no white man can really be a citizen of the dark world or a dark man a citizen of the white; they can at best make their habitations there. Only with the assistance of disguise can a man be a citizen of the whole world, and even then there are countries that would tax his ingenuity too far. Sir Richard Burton could get to Mecca, but could he have persuaded a Tokyo policeman that he was a true-born Japanese? The translator of the *Arabian Nights* had recourse to walnut juice, or its equivalent, when he set out on his perilous pilgrimage, but for ordinary purposes the best protective colouring for travellers who do not wish to be too much gaped at is a native hat. If one always bought at Calais, immediately on disembarking, a hat two sizes too small, one might pass through France without attracting a glance. Indigenous clothes would make things so much easier that I am surprised that no enterprising merchant—probably of Hebraic origin—has opened in every harbour a clothing store where the more characteristic apparel of the country can be obtained by the arriving voyagers. It is as reasonable as a money-changer's office.

This reminds me of my own failure with

headgear. Before leaving England I had carefully selected what I imagined to be a hat that would pass unnoticed in any American street, where the soft hat has always been more in vogue than, until recently, in London. On arriving at San Francisco, and being continually (short of the point of surrendering my walking-stick) desirous of mingling and merging rather than attracting attention, I was prepared to buy a Stetson, or whatever offered, if it seemed that my own choice was outlandish; but I decided that it would serve. How wrong I was I learned when I came to read a description of myself by Mr. Holliday, who, after passing me under examination in Chicago, dwelt with almost savage emphasis on the exotic peculiarities of my headgear.

Of all the cities that I know, London is most particular about its hats; we adjust them in mirrors and deplore slovenly angles; and this carefulness is an aid, by contrast, in detecting the alien in our midst, who is almost always less self-consciously roofed. But hats, though so indicative and as evidence often so trustworthy, are not all. There is the walk. Why should a Frenchman take a shorter step than an Englishman? Has this ever been explained? Jews are said to shuffle because their ancestors in the desert had to push the sand aside with their

feet. True or not, the explanation is plausible, and certainly a vast majority of Jews, no matter what flag they trade under, or how far from Palestine, still walk in this way and could be known by it if the other racial signs were invisible.

The good foreigner, however we define him, is distinguished by an instantaneous quickening of vision. At home we take almost everything but our neighbours' failings (which must be narrowly inquired into), fallen horses, and vehicular collisions, for granted; but when we travel we are observing all the while. This is why it is only foreigners and provincials who know anything of the treasures of art and architecture that any city possesses. Have you ever seen a Florentine in the Uffizi? or a New-Yorker in the Metropolitan Museum? This may be a too extreme question; but I am certain that no one ever saw a Parisian in Sainte Chapelle, and it was not until they heard, the other day, that it was about to fall down, that any Londoners ever entered Westminster Abbey. If, however, you wish when in Paris to be sure of hearing the language of England and America you may confidentially seek the Louvre.

THE CYNOSURE

AMONG the passengers on the boat was a tall dark man with a black moustache and well-cut clothes who spent most of his time pacing the deck or reading alone in his chair. Every ship has such recluses. Often, however, they are on the fringe of several sets, although members of none, but this man remained apart and, being so solitary, was naturally the subject of comment and inquiry, even more of conjecture. His name was easy to discover from the plan of the tables, but we knew no more until little Mrs. King, who is the best scout in the world, brought the tidings.

"I can't tell you much," she began breathlessly; "but there's something frightfully interesting. Colonel Swift knows all about him. He met him once in Poona and they have mutual friends. And how do you think he described him? He says he's the worst liver in India."

There is no need to describe the sensation created by this piece of information. If the man had set us guessing before, he now excited a frenzy of curiosity. The glad news traversed the ship like wind, brightening every eye; at

any rate every female eye. For, though the good may have their reward elsewhere, it is beyond doubt that, if public interest is any guerdon, a certain variety of the bad get it on earth.

Show me a really bad man—dark-complexioned, with well-cut clothes and a black moustache—and I will show you a hero; a hero a little distorted, it is true, but not much the less heroic for that. Show me a notorious breaker of male hearts and moral laws and—so long as she is still in business—I will show you a heroine: again a little distorted, but with more than the magnetism of the virtuous variety.

For the rest of the voyage the lonely passenger was lonely only because he preferred to be, or was unaware of the agitation which he caused. People walked for hours longer than they liked or even intended, in order to have a chance of passing him in his chair and scrutinizing again the features that masked such depravity. For that they masked it cannot be denied. A physiognomist looking at him would have conceded a certain gloom, a trend towards introspection, possibly a hypertrophied love of self, but no more. Physiognomists, however, can retire from the case, for they are as often wrong as handwriting experts. And if any Lavater had been on board and had advanced

such a theory he would have been as unpopular as Jonah, for the man's wickedness was not only a joy to us but a support. Without it the voyage would have been intolerable.

What, we all wondered, had he done? Had he murdered, as well as destroyed happy homes? Was he crooked at cards? Our minds became acutely active, but we could discover no more because the old Colonel, the source of knowledge, had fallen ill and was confined to his berth.

Meanwhile the screw revolved, sweepstakes were lost and won, deck sports flourished, fancy-dress dances were held, concerts were endured, a Colonial Bishop addressed us on Sunday mornings, and all the time the tall dark man with the sallow complexion and the black moustache and different suits of well-cut clothes sat in his chair and passed serenely from one Oppenheim to another as though no living person were within leagues.

It was not until we were actually in port that the Colonel recovered and I came into touch with him. Standing by the rail we took advantage of the liberty to speak together which on a ship such propinquity sanctions. After we had exchanged a few remarks about the clumsiness of the disembarking arrangements, I referred to the man of mystery and turpitude, and asked

for particulars of some of his milder offences.

"Why do you suppose him such a blackguard?" he asked.

"But surely——" I began, a little disconcerted.

"He's a man," the Colonel continued, "that every one should be sorry for. He's a wreck, and he's going home now probably to receive his death sentence."

This was a promising phrase and I cheered up a little, but only for a moment.

"That poor devil," said the Colonel, "as I told Mrs. King earlier in the voyage, has the worst liver in India."

THOUGHTS ON THEFT

WE must all, at times, have wished to follow a famous example and, lighting the candle, examine the other fellow's bumps; for "How," we despairingly cry, "can it be possible for a human being to behave like that? What kind of skull can he possess, to be so absurd?"—the detection of absurdity in others being one of life's most constant alleviations. But perhaps what really incites us to reach for the candlestick is not so much the absurdity of others as their difference from ourselves. "I flatter myself," we say, "I can understand most points of view, even though I don't agree with them; but the way So-and-so goes on absolutely beats me." How often has one heard that!

At the moment, any researches of my own into cranial protuberance or concavity would be confined to the head of the individual who stole my door-mat. I had moved into a new flat and provided myself with a door-mat of some excellence, which, with a want of suspicion that may strike you as childish but is an essential ingredient of my character, I placed outside instead of inside the door. It remained there

considerably less than an hour. Indeed, it must have been removed almost as soon as it was laid down.

A neighbouring policeman, to whom I resorted more for comfort than for vengeance, gave me no sympathy. "I can report it," he said; "but what's the use? This is a terrible neighbourhood for sneak thieves."

What I want is to know more about the sneak-thief in question. Not for purposes of prosecution, in the least, but to satisfy curiosity. I want to know how he views life. Is he aware that he is an enemy of society, or does he purloin instinctively and without thought? Does he know that he is a traitor to the human family, or has he drugged his conscience with sophistries? Have the Commandments no meaning for him whatever? Has he no fear of hell fire? And how does he feel about me, destitute of the new property to which I was entitled by purchase? Or does he guess that I stole it too? Does he think about the owners of his booty at all, or are all his thoughts directed to realizing the proceeds and evading capture?

And this brings me to a more personal question: Had I seen him carrying the door-mat off, what should I have done? The answer is easy: I should have done nothing. Whatever else out

of my natural line I might be led in a moment of excitement to do, no provocation would cause me to run down Sloane Street after a retreating door-mat, crying "Stop thief!" But if, by any freakish chance, I had pursued, it would have been less to regain the door-mat than to learn more of what the Americans call the "mentality" of the bandit. In short, to examine his bumps.

To thieve does not happen to be one of the temptations that beset me—there are plenty left without it—and therefore when I came to examine this fellow's bumps I should probably find a disparity between his head and my own in the region of acquisitiveness; but otherwise we might be exactly similar. For the odd thing—and the sinister thing—is that people who steal are so very like the people who don't, are so very nearly normal. Or can it be that it is really they who are normal and we who are not?

I can understand that in the early days the transition from the state when all things were free, to the state when rights of property came in, must have been so gradual as to be almost imperceptible, so that no one failing to notice the change ought to be considered as very wicked. Adam and Eve, of course, took where they would. Abel and Cain and Seth took

where they would, and so for a while did their mysteriously engendered descendants. But then, one day, one of them, taking, as usual and without thought, where he would, was pulled up very short by a commanding voice bidding him drop it. "Don't you know this is my land and everything on it is mine?" the voice said; and at that moment theft was born; and it was so little different from the natural processes of the moment immediately preceding that no wonder there was born at the same time a confusion so complete that it still exists.

And the law's attitude to theft has become so perplexingly lenient too. The other day, for instance, a Harley Street physician attended at a police court to ask that the two boys who had recently abstracted his rug from his car, while he was visiting a patient, should merely be caned and warned, and not punished further. But when he had preferred his request, he was told by the magistrate that it was he who was really to blame, by leaving his car unprotected! In other words, it is not those who thieve who are reprehensible, but those who do not guard their property.

Providence in its infinite wisdom does now and then make it awkward for the primitive-minded! To give mankind empty stomachs

and two hands, and also ownership rights and lawyers, is to ask for trouble.

Meanwhile, what are we to do about theft? Because, even if it is understandable, it is no less a treachery to civilisation; and there is little doubt that it is on the increase. I read the other day some statistics which were appalling, and which included a new social danger consisting of ten thousand motor-car thieves. Personally I would as soon steal a railway train as a motor-car, having no wish to own either or to do anything with them but make use of them and quickly leave them; but tastes differ. My own enterprise in peculation would be confined to pictures: Number 3214, for instance, in the National Gallery. But there is always some fellow looking. . . .

Various reasons for the growth of stealing have been put forward. The movies, of course: such a film as "Alias Jimmy Valentine," where an attractive scamp, after an exciting career as a burglar, is called upon, while "making good," to employ his skill at safe-breaking to rescue a child locked inside, so that he becomes a hero as well as a reformed character. I saw this a few weeks ago, and can quite understand how it might stimulate the youthful breast. And then there is "Raffles." And the War, of course,

is largely blamed. If officers and gentlemen winked at the batmen who, during hostilities, set plump chickens on the table every evening, how are those batmen, now at home again, to think too seriously of the distinctions between *meum* and *tuum* when they want something for themselves? A door-mat, for example. In war many of the safeguards of society go; honesty very early. Necessity knows no law. Our future mood, I suppose, should be one of eternal gratitude that we never invaded the enemy's country, because, if we had, the loot habit might by now be so widely spread that nothing would be safe.

But it is not impossible that the War's contribution to the increase of theft was its tendency to make us all more natural. That is a disturbing thought, if you like.

HONOURS EASY

I

NOT very long ago the following advertisements appeared in the same column of *The Southshire Daily Gazette:*

"Lost, a pure black Pekinese dog, wearing a silver badge marked 'Cherub.' Handsome reward offered. F. B., Grand Hotel, Brightbourne."

"Found, a black Pekinese, wearing a silver badge marked 'Cherub.' No reward required. The Limes, Cheviot Road, Brightbourne."

II

On the same morning the paper was opened and scanned almost simultaneously by Mrs. Frederick Bathurst in the sitting-room which she and her husband occupied at the Grand Hotel, and by Mr. Hartley Friend in the morning room at "The Limes."

"Oh, Fred," exclaimed Mrs. Bathurst, "Cherub has been found. He's all safe at a house called 'The Limes,' in Cheviot Road. Isn't that splendid?"

"Very good news," said her husband. "I told you not to worry."

"It's a direct answer to prayer," said Mrs. Bathurst. "But——"

"But what?" her husband inquired.

"But I do wish you had taken my advice not to offer any reward. You might so easily have left it open. People aren't so mercenary as all that. It stands to reason that any one staying at an hotel like this and bringing a dog with them—always an expensive thing to do—and valuing it enough to advertise its loss, would behave properly when the time came."

"I don't know," Mr. Bathurst replied. "Does anything stand to reason? The ordinary dog thief, holding up an animal to ransom, might be deterred from returning it if no mention of money was made. You remember we decided on that."

"Oh, no, I don't think so. You merely had your own way again; that was all. I was always against offering a reward. And the word 'handsome' too. So reckless! In any case I never agreed to that. You put that in later. Another thing," Mrs. Bathurst continued, "I knew it in some curious way—in my bones, as they say—that the fineness of Cherub's nature, its innocence, its radiant friendliness, would overcome any sordidness in the person who

found him, poor darling, all lost and unhappy. No one who has been much with that simple sweet character could fail to be the better for it."

Mr. Bathurst coughed.

"Don't you agree?" his wife asked.

"Well," said Mr. Bathurst, after helping himself to another egg, "let us hope so, at any rate."

"It's gone beyond mere hope," said his wife triumphantly. "Listen to this"; and she read out the sentence from the second advertisement, "'No reward required.' There," she added, "isn't that proof? I'll go round to Cheviot Road directly after breakfast and say how grateful we are, and bring the darling back."

III

Meanwhile at "The Limes" Mr. Hartley Friend was pacing the room with impatient steps.

"I do wish you would try to be less impulsive," he was saying to his wife. "Anything in the nature of business you would be so much wiser to leave to me."

"What is it now?" Mrs. Friend asked with perfect placidity.

"This dog," said her husband, "that fastened

itself on you in this deplorable way—whatever possessed you to rush into print about it?"

"Of course I rushed, as you say. Think of the feelings of the poor woman who has lost her pet. It was the only kind thing to do."

"'Poor woman' indeed! I assure you she's nothing of the sort. One would think you were a millionaire to be ladling out benefactions like this. 'No reward required.' Fancy not even asking for the price of the advertisement to be refunded!"

"But that would have been so squalid."

"'Squalid!' I've no patience with you. Justice isn't squalor. It's—it's justice. As for your 'poor woman,' listen to this." And he read out the Bathurst advertisement with terrible emphasis on the words "Handsome reward offered." "Do you hear that—'handsome'?"

"Yes, I hear," said his wife amiably; "but that isn't my idea of making money."

"I hope you don't suppose it's mine," said her husband. "But there is such a thing as common sense. Why on earth the accident of this little brute following us home should run us into the expense of an advertisement and a certain amount of food and drink I'm hanged if I can see."

"Well, dear," said his wife with the same

amiability, "if you can't see it I can't make you."

IV

A few minutes later the arrival of "a lady who's come for the Peek" was announced by "The Limes" parlourmaid.

"No," said Mr. Friend as his wife rose, "leave it to me. I'll deal with it. The situation is very delicate."

"How can I thank you enough," began Mrs. Bathurst, "for being so kind and generous about our little angel? My husband and I agreed that nothing more charmingly considerate can ever have been done."

At this point Mrs. Friend followed her husband into the room, and Mrs. Bathurst renewed her expressions of gratitude.

"But at any rate," she added to her, "you will permit me to defray the cost of the advertisement? I could not allow you to be at that expense."

Before Mrs. Friend could speak her husband intervened. "No, madam," he said, "I couldn't think of it. Please don't let the mention of money vulgarize a little friendly act like this. We are only too glad to have been the means of reuniting you and your pet."

TEMPTATION

TEMPTATION is a theme on which, in mixed company, people are only partially candid; but one can extract some amusing confidences none the less.

"My greatest temptation," said a pretty lady, "occurred last winter. I was on the Riviera, staying in an hotel that I did not much fancy and spending far too much time in wondering why I had ever come away from an honest cold climate in order to be mocked by the ghost of sunshine. You know the feeling."

Every one seemed to know it.

"Well, one evening, after I had been there a few days, some friends arrived at their villa near by and I was asked to dine there. I had bought a model or two in Paris on the way down, and I dressed with a good deal of pleasure and anticipation of a little fun at last. But all that feeling evaporated when I came to put on my rings. I had some special ones for such occasions, and I told my maid—she was a recent acquisition—I would wear those.

"She laid out two or three.

"'No,' I said, 'not those—the emerald and the ruby.'

"'But these are all,' she said.

"'All!' I cried. 'What can you mean? Aren't the emerald and the ruby there? And the diamond hoop?'

"There was no sign of them!

"I was stupefied. Sooner or later, I suppose, every one is robbed; it is a rule of life; but it had never before happened to me.

"I was insured right enough, but the rings were very precious to me. I hated to lose them.

"We searched the jewel-case through and through, looked in every likely and unlikely place, and then I sent for the manager.

"He was polite; he would make inquiries; but he could not believe that the theft had been committed under his roof. Was I sure I had brought them with me? Ladies sometimes made mistakes.

"Yes, I was sure.

"Had I no suspicions?—this with a glance at the maid.

"I was confident that the theft was by a stranger.

"Very well. But there was a rule as to entrusting jewels at the office safe. However, he would do what he could. If I would give particulars he would tell the police.

"So I wrote out a minute description of each missing ring, and went off to dinner feeling utterly wretched and forlorn.

"The next day I saw police officials endlessly, and my poor maid was examined and cross-examined by them, and I was conscious that every servant in the place viewed me with dislike, for I had made them all suspect.

"But nothing resulted. There was no trace of the thieves, and I hurried back to London to tell the insurance people and leave the rest to them.

"More interviews followed, and I must say that next to the pets at Scotland Yard who give you back your umbrella, insurance people are the dearest creatures in the world. In course of time I received a cheque in compensation and the matter was closed."

She stopped.

"But where was the temptation?" some one asked.

"I'm coming to that," she said. "I received the cheque by an evening post, and the next day I went down to the bank to pay it in in person, and, having done so, I asked for a box of valuables that I keep there."

The pretty lady paused again.

"Well?" we all asked.

"Well," she said, "they brought me the box to

the waiting-room, and the first thing I saw when I opened it was one of the lost rings, and there, underneath, were the others."

"Good Heavens!" some one said.

"Yes, there they were. I had carefully deposited them there before I went away and now for the first time remembered it. How one's memory could play one such a trick is a mystery, but that seems to be what memories are for—to let one down.

"You see the temptation now," she resumed. "All the way home I had it before me. No one but I knew about the rings; the insurance people need never discover; if I liked to be dishonest I could have the rings and the money too."

She stopped altogether.

"By Jove, yes!" some one said, and a great silence prevailed.

There is a silly ass at most parties of any size, and we had ours, and he rushed in, as usual, where angels had too much taste to tread.

"And what did you do?" he asked eagerly.

THE WARDROBE

ONCE upon a time there was a wardrobe in which a man's clothes were kept, the coats and waistcoats hanging over wooden holders and the trousers from clips. It was large enough for all his various suits, morning and evening; and they were all on fairly good terms with each other, even if the Harris tweeds were a little clannish and the frock-coat a little superior. This was because the frock-coat had been to a garden-party at Buckingham Palace; for the owner of the clothes, you must know, was what is called a man about town, who had time and opportunity to do the correct thing.

The oldest suit in the wardrobe was one of the Harris tweeds. It had been there for fifteen years and was still worn on holidays. It knew all, from the "Station Master's Garden" at St. Andrews, to the little cemetery at the foot of the Mullion links. Its age and its Scottish sagacity made it the natural head of the company, and its advice was often asked, but, owing to the difficulty of following its Highland accent, was taken only by chance.

It was an exciting moment for the clothes every morning when their master's valet opened

the door and took out a pair of trousers. He always took the trousers first and the coat and waistcoat a few minutes later; but the choice of the trousers told what the coat and waistcoat would be. In the few minutes there was no end of chatter.

"Hullo! it's golf to-day," the others would say, as the knickerbockers disappeared. Or "A luncheon-party, I think," if it were one of the pair of trousers worn with the frock-coat.

"I hope there'll be some nice dresses to talk to," the frock-coat would say if it was his turn. Sometimes the waistcoat would be left behind, and then they would know it was a wedding or other festival and one of the white waistcoats from a drawer would be needed.

"I don't care much for weddings," said the frock-coat. "Although there's always a lot of company, it's usually too new to be interesting, straight from the tailor's and the dressmaker's. But what I most resent is the confetti."

"Ay, mon," the Harris tweeds replied, "that's where we hae the advantage over ye. Rain, snow, hail, confetti, rice—it's all one tae us. We're the only sensible practical suitings amang ye. But it must be awfu', seeing the guid wholesome rice being wasted."

"Economy! what a boring theme!" a fancy waistcoat remarked.

It was also always an exciting moment when a new suit was hung in the wardrobe, because the new clothes brought tidings of the tailor's—the old homestead, so to speak—and there were countless questions as to who had cut it, who had stitched it, what changes there were in the staff, and so on.

In the evening, when their master came back, the excitement was confined to the dress-suit and the dinner-suit—which would it be? Would there be beautiful dresses and therefore the long tails and a white waistcoat, or just men only and a short jacket? Not that other men's clothes are so dull: dinner-jacket can have a vast deal of gossip to retail to dinner-jacket; but full fig is more amusing. You see, some of the new gowns have delicious Parisian scandal to unfold, and even the less discreet can be counted upon for revelations of their wearers. It was well to keep in with daddy long-tails, as he was called, if you wanted to have these stories repeated to you.

As the week wore on another excitement developed, for the great question which then began to exercise the clothes was—"Is he going away from Saturday to Monday, or not? And, if so, what will he take?" The actual packing they did not like at all: being jammed together in a bag is no joke; but it was all right when they

were unpacked amid the new surroundings. It was interesting too to see what kind of valets or maids there were, and if they were rougher with the brush than their own James was, or more gentle. James had a savage way of castigating them.

But when I say that all the clothes were agitated by this week-end problem I am wrong. There were, of course, those that were out of season—they knew that their time could not come again just yet—and there was the pair of black trousers at the back, which could never go out unless some one had died. They were very seldom wanted, although the door never opened without giving them a little shock; but once—it was during a bad influenza epidemic—the black pair had been out three times in a fortnight. How they talked about it!

And then one day the man himself died, although the clothes did not know for quite a long while that this had happened. He had often been ill before and had not needed them, and this might be the case now. They wondered exceedingly what was going on, but James never came near, and so there was no chance of discovering by asking his coat. Ordinarily they liked it when James (and his brush) stayed away, but not this time.

It is a terrible day for wardrobes when their

owners die and they fall into the hands of the people who buy such things. I say "buy," but that is a slip: ladies' and gentlemen's wardrobes are not "bought," as any advertisement column will tell you: they are "purchased." These clothes were the perquisites of James, who, being a little brisk fattish man, entirely the wrong shape, had no personal use for any of them, and so he transferred the whole lot to a dealer.

It was then that their agonies set in. They were marked at prices disgracefully below their cost; they were handled and tried on; they were depreciated by intending purchasers and extolled without any truth at all by the dealer, who said that they had been the property of a Duke who was moving to the tropics; they were bargained over and at last sold. And that was not the worst, for many of them were altered—and oh, how clothes hate that! In every case there was a distressing social fall.

Only the Harris tweeds were happy. They did not care who wore them so long as they were worn and were out in the open air again.

REUNION

ONCE upon a time there was a man who spent far too much time in Beauchamp Place and kindred haunts, looking for odds and ends; by which he meant all kinds of articles which our ancestors had real use for, but which we merely hang up on the walls or set on the mantelpiece: dishes, plates, cups and saucers, glasses, finger-bowls, pistols, trivets, paper-weights, pestles and mortars, apothecaries' jars, even skewers and punch-ladles. Such things filled his rooms, but, although the rooms were full to congestion, their owner was continually bringing in something new, and it was always "decorative" or "quaint," to use his favourite words, and sometimes both, but too often only quaint.

They had been changing hands for a century and more and would certainly continue to do so; the metal ware without any doubt at all, and the crockery and porcelain possibly if not probably. Oh, how old crockery and porcelain shudders and squirms when light-hearted maid-servants, with their thoughts on other things, chiefly their evening out, lift them and begin to dust! You

have no idea. But the pistols and the swords, the ancient fire-irons and brass receptacles—they are apathetic.

When midnight came and their tongues were loosened (*vide* Hans Christian Andersen and other authorities) you cannot conceive what a babel there was. The man bought so much that the life of his odds and ends was really quite exciting, with constant newcomers to listen to: exciting, that is, for all but those who wanted to do all the talking and resented competition.

"Where did you come from?" was the first question always put to the latest arrival.

And then: "What did you cost?"

"I came from 'The Merchant Adventurers,'" said, one night, a Bristol blue decanter.

"How much were you?"

"I was thirty-five shillings," it answered with very perceptible pride. "I've been going up steadily for years. Do you know, when I first left home—I was in a cottage in Gloucestershire, near Stanway—I was only half-a-crown. A dealer who pretended he was a cyclist in need of tea bought me. And then I was in a shop in Cheltenham, where I fetched half-a-sovereign. Another dealer from London bought me, and I went to a shop in Bloomsbury, where I was a pound, and then I travelled westwards and went up to thirty-five shillings. Isn't it wonderful?"

But it isn't with any cheerful blue glass decanter that this history is concerned, but with a certain morose warming-pan.

You must understand that all the odds and ends so decorative and quaint that litter the rooms of these curio-hunters nourish a grievance. And that grievance is that they are always idle. They hate being just ornamental; they want to be at their own jobs again. It never occurred to the man that there could be any discontent among his rarities, but if he had had sharper ears or more imagination he would have known that they were all spoiling for work once more. Dishes and plates like to be eaten from; cups like to contain hot tea; paperweights prefer to be holding down paper; pistols are miserable unless they now and then go off; and punch-ladles consider every moment lost that is not spent in ladling punch.

But of all the unemployed articles in the room, that which most resented its foolish lazy life was the warming-pan. There it hung on the wall for ever, with no fire in its great copper receptacle, no bustling housewife to grip its handle and thrust it about between the sheets, not even a bed in sight; its sole occupation was to be decorative and quaint.

"Of all the rot!" it used to say.

"Bed-warmers should warm beds," it would mutter.

"Hanging on a drawing-room wall doing nothing," it would grumble with profundities of scorn.

The worst of it was that this forced sloth had impaired its temper, and it consorted with none of the others.

"Not a soul I care to waste my words on," it would complain.

And then one day the man led triumphantly into the room two workmen, one carrying a pole and the other an electric lamp, and after much hindering from the man (who was a fuss-budget), the lamp was at length firmly established on the pole and connected with a switch.

"Splendid!" said the man, and he tipped each of the assistants half-a-crown.

"What have we got here?" thought the warming-pan. "More nonsense. I'm blest if he hasn't torn away a bedpost from a four poster to stick his old lamp on!"

And then he looked more narrowly and saw that the post was from the very bed that he used to warm every night for years and years all that long time ago.

And the bedpost recognized the warming-pan and twinkled with joy. (You have heard about the twinkling of a bedpost, haven't you?)

"Oh, my dear," said the warming-pan directly twelve o'clock struck that night—"oh, my dear, you can't think how glad I am to see you!"

IN THE PADDED SEATS

I: THE COWARDLY CONSUMER

I HAD just made a selection of the remarks that fall naturally from the tongue when a match without a head is drawn from the box, and I added the statement that the headless match is becoming increasingly common. The result was that we drifted into a discussion on the general inferiority of everything—inferior workmanship everywhere and the lowering of all standards of quality. The bequest of the War, we once again agreed.

"But it isn't only the War," said our tame philosopher. "The War is blamed for everything. But my memory is sufficiently long and accurate to enable me to assure you that there was a good deal of shoddiness in England even before 1914. That couldn't be the fault of the War. What was it, then?"

To his intense satisfaction no one had any reason to suggest, and he therefore was free to supply his own.

"I'll tell you," he said. "It's our national soft-heartedness that's to blame. That's why

almost everything is second-rate. The 'Two Nations' into which we might be divided are the Crafty Producers and the Cowardly Consumers. For all our bluster and nonsense about never being slaves, we are cowards at heart, incapable of insisting on our rights. We may be brave for others, but we're worms for ourselves."

"But are we?" some one indignantly inquired.

"Well, I am, for one," said the philosopher. "I wish I could say otherwise, but I can't. My soft heart is the most infernal bore. It fills me with respect for other people's feelings and an unwillingness to wound that are not only absolutely retrograde and obscurantist, but amount to treachery to the community."

"But why? It sounds delightful to be so understanding and considerate."

"In the abstract it may be, but in real life it produces inferiority at every turn. One never gets the best."

"But why, if you know, do you put up with it?"

"It's because such sympathetic ways are always establishing with people closer relations than are wise. I get on intimate terms too quickly. And the next thing is that I and the others who are like me—and we are a dangerously numerous class—are imposed upon."

"Can't you protest?"

"Protest! No. We haven't the pluck. Our fatal alloy of pity begins to work—our terror lest anything said or done by us should cause distress. I'll give you an example. I've been going to the same tailor for years, and every time I go to him he gets worse. Look at this coat."

We looked at it with disapproval.

"Well, I can't change and go somewhere else. It's impossible. The tailor and I have been too friendly. I should lie awake at night filled with remorse and misery. And I'm not unique. As a matter of fact I believe I'm normal. It's because the majority of English people are like this that the quality of things is so poor. I've just been staying in the worst hotel I was ever in, but do you suppose I said anything about it? Not a syllable; I endured it; and all because I allowed myself to feel sorry for the waiter downstairs and the chambermaid upstairs. You may, all of you, look stern now and affect to think me an idiot, but I'll bet you'd have been about the same. It's in the national blood. We're cowards, we English, we haven't got hearts of oak at all: our heads very possibly; but our hearts are made of the wood of the weeping willow.

"Another thing," he went on. "The clever

ones know about it and take advantage. I don't say they know it consciously, but sub-consciously. I'll give you an instance. The other day in a restaurant I summoned up courage and sent for the manager and, very nicely, pointed out that really I couldn't eat what was set before me. I would like to, but I couldn't. He was full of apologies. He took it away and in about five minutes returned with a special dish, which he said he had superintended himself. It was disgusting—far more disgusting than the last—but under his eye I simulated relish. And all the while I was asking myself, 'Does he know I'm so weak that I couldn't complain again to save my life? Has he really tried to please me? Or is it the same dish with something foul added, and do they all know it, and are they silently giggling as they watch me pretending to enjoy it?' "

We made sounds expressive of our compassion for him.

"It's all very well," he said, "to be sorry for me and perhaps to despise me. I despise myself. But I know there's not one among you who wouldn't have put up the same pretence. We're all like this. We're all soft-hearted. A kind word can buy us. Even the Crafty Producers, when they become Consumers, are the same; they are cravens too. Nothing can ever

improve in England until ruthlessness comes in. We shall go on being robbed by shopkeepers and poisoned by restaurateurs and insulted by theatrical managers and reduced to madness by the Post Master General. Nothing can be done until our hearts harden."

"But if, as you say," some one said, "the majority of English people are like you and go about being sentimentally compassionate and tolerating and forgiving and forgetting, how did we ever become the conquering race?"

"Ah!" was the reply, "that's the mystery."

II: PUBLIC SPIRIT

We were talking—having finished with politics and other current events—about the duties of a good citizen, and the conspicuous ease with which they were now being avoided.

"Why do you say 'now'?" some one asked.

"Because since the War so much pride has disappeared," said our leading Jeremiah. "Everything is shirked by unconscientious workmen."

"I wish," murmured the doctor, "some one would write a book saying what England before the War was really like. The way people talk you'd think it was sheer Paradise, but I seem

to remember a lot of unsatisfactory things even then."

"The worst of being a good citizen," said the artist, "is that you get so landed. Any man who goes out of his way to be public-spirited runs horrible risks. That's why there are so few of us."

"'Us'? What do you mean by 'us'?" a scornful voice inquired.

"The public-spirited people," the artist rejoined in surprised tones. "Those rare souls who put the good of the community before self-indulgence. I happen to be one of them, and I am suffering accordingly. If there were the faintest indication that you would like to hear the story I would tell it. I might even tell it if there were none."

We composed ourselves to listen.

"Every one," he said, "must have noticed that taxi-drivers just now are a new set of men, who know very little about London. Once upon a time there was a strict examination in topography at Scotland Yard, and if a would-be driver couldn't give the direct route from, say, the Brixton Bon Marché to the Golders Green Empire he was put back a week or so for further study of the map. There was an excellent mechanic that I was interested in who was

ploughed three times. But all that care seems to have gone by the board, and now we have taxi-drivers who know nothing."

Every one leaned forward to cite personal experiences that proved this, but the artist contrived to hold the floor.

"I was driven the other day," he went on, "by one who was so grossly indirect in the route he followed that I felt I must do a thing I hate doing—I felt that I must put my foot down. I was a silly ass, of course. Sensible people don't interfere; they grin and bear it, or they don't grin but bear it. Every now and then, however, one feels that one must take a line. It's like writing to the papers, and calling yourself *Pro Bono Publico*. The desire to do that comes on most men once, I suppose; but that's a very easy imitation of responsible citizenship compared with what was demanded of me.

"To make a short story long, I sat in the cab summoning up pluck enough to give the man something less than his fare and a lecture on his incompetence. I would remind him of the police regulation which compels a taxi to take the shortest route, and I would then hand him my card and tell him to take out a summons for the full fare. I had never given a card in this way before, and I rather liked the idea of it. But at the same time, being a shocking coward, I

shrank from the whole thing. It only shows what an absolutely artificial exotic this public spirit is, and how it has to be cultivated.

"Well, I got out of the cab with my card and the money all ready; but when I had a good look at the size of the man I weakened again. Yet I had to go on. It was a matter of pride, and pride, I take it, is four-fifths of most courage.

" 'You don't know your London,' I said. 'Your duty is to go by the shortest and most direct route, and you've come the longest.'

"His expression, which had begun with surprise, changed to dark hostility.

" 'Who's come by the longest way?' he asked, and I was forced into the contemptible position of having to reply that he had. It was going to be an ordinary 'You're another' squabble.

" 'How?' he then asked, pushing his face into mine and glaring with an awful malignity.

"It was just this kind of question that I wanted to avoid. My idea had been to hand him the money and the card swiftly and decisively and leave him to ponder on his folly while the lesson sank in. I would have given a fiver for the comfort of a policeman, but there was none in sight.

"I braced myself again and went through with it. 'Never mind how,' I said. 'You've

driven me so far out of the right course that I'm not going to pay more than this, and if you think you're entitled to any more you must summons me'; and I thrust the coin and the card into his hand, leapt up the steps and banged my door.

"When I got inside I sat down in the hall and felt my heart beating like an hydraulic ram. Every second I expected to hear a double knock on the door. Indeed, I shouldn't have been surprised if it had been kicked open, for he was a powerful man.

"But nothing happened, and after a while I crept upstairs, a physical and nervous wreck. Still, I had the knowledge that I had done my duty. I had been a citizen. I don't say I glowed, but I was conscious of rectitude."

He paused.

Then he resumed. "But now," he said, "I've lost all that feeling."

"Why?" we asked.

"Because," he said, "I daren't take a cab any more. I'm so terrified that the driver might turn out to be that one that I creep about on foot or straphang. It's like Captain Hook and the crocodile. I came here this evening in an omnibus, in which I was one of five men clinging to the ceiling. No, no more public spirit. Finished."

"Poor old chap!" said our leading cynic. "And he's not even got the *réclame* he'd have got from the case if the driver had summonsed him!"

III: BEFORE AND AFTER

We were once again, for the thousandth time, discussing pre-war and post-war conditions, when the Colonel came in and placed himself with some care on the cushioned fender which, even without any assistance from half-pay officers, succeeds in keeping most of the heat of the fire from the rest of the room.

The Colonel listened to the talk for some time and then informed us that the best example of pre-war and post-war differences that had ever come under any one's notice had come under his own. Before he could be asked to relate the occurrence he was already relating it.

"It was somewhere about 1910," he said, "and we had been living for several years in a rambling old place in Kent. It was near Ashford; very good country, but the house was low-lying and, having a horror of rheumatism, we decided to move to London. So we went up to town and saw various agents and at last settled on a house in Kensington.

"Having fixed it up and put the decorators in we went back to Ashford to prepare for the

move. It must have been about a week later that I was called out of the garden to meet a stranger who gave no name but said he had come from London on purpose to see me.

"One has one's weak moments, and I went.

"I found him in my study—an ordinary-looking man with a bowler hat, who was a shade too deferential in manner. He handed me his card —So-and-so, Family Butcher, somewhere in Notting Hill. Hearing that we were moving into his neighbourhood, he said, he had come down to solicit the honour of purveying the best English mutton and Scotch beef to my household. They say 'purvey,' but Heaven knows why it's a better word than 'provide' or 'supply.'

"Well, as I didn't know anything about butchers in London, and as he had taken the trouble to come all that way to ask for our custom, I said we would try him; and he went off much gratified, leaving his card on my mantel-piece.

"A week later another fellow called in just the same way. I saw him too—the same type exactly: bowler hat and apologetics. But this time I wouldn't let him begin; I got in first.

" 'You're a Kensington butcher,' I said, 'and you have come all the way from town to solicit the honour of purveying the best English mut-

ton and Scotch beef to my household when we move to Campden Hill.'

"He admitted it.

" 'But you're too late,' I said; 'you've lost by a week.'

"I gave him a drink by way of a solatium and we had a little talk. I asked him how they discovered who the new tenants were, and he said that they got the information from the agents. Directly they saw the 'Let' notice up they made inquiries.

" 'And how far would you go for a new customer?' I asked him. 'Ashford is nearly sixty miles, and then there's the cab to my house, and you must get lunch somewhere. That all costs money, and you'd have to stick it on the joints like anything to get it back. How far would you go?'

"He said that for a good customer he'd go any distance. Customers were what they wanted. There was terrible competition for them.

"And then he got into his cab and returned to town with his tail between his legs.

"Well," said the Colonel, "we moved, and we got our meat from the first fellow, and he was all right. We stuck to him until we left in 1918 and went to Reigate."

He braced himself for his dénouement. "Not long ago," he continued, "I came up to see my

sister in the Cromwell Road, and while I was there some people telephoned inviting themselves to lunch, and as the household was short-handed and busy I volunteered to go out and get the necessary cutlets.

"Would you believe it, the very first butcher I came to was the fellow who had come to Ashford a week too late, the fellow who would go almost any distance for a customer; I recognized him in a twinkling, although he had a blue apron on and several years had passed.

" 'I want some cutlets,' I said.

" 'Are you one of our regular customers?' he asked.

" 'No,' I said.

" 'Then I'm sorry but I can't serve you,' he replied.

"Can you beat it?"

IV: TIGHT CORNERS

The talk was running on the critical situations in which we had found ourselves—those of us whose lives were adventurous enough to comprise any.

One man had been caught by the tide in Brittany and escaped by the skin of his teeth. Another had been on an elephant when a wounded tiger charged at it. A third had been on the

top storey of a burning house. A fourth was torpedoed in the War.

"But you all talk," said one of the company, "as though tight corners were always physical affairs. Surely they can be tighter when they are mental. The tightest corner I was ever in was at Christie's."

"Christie's?"

"Yes. I had been lunching rather well at a club in St. James's Street with an old friend from abroad, and passing along King Street afterwards, he persuaded me to look in at the sale-room. The place was full. They were selling Barbizon pictures, and getting tremendous sums for each: two thousand, three thousand, for little bits of things—forest scenes, pools at evening, shepherdesses, the regular subjects. Nothing went for three figures at all. Well, we watched for a little while and then I found myself bidding too—just for fun. I had exactly sixty-three pounds in the bank and not enough securities to borrow five hundred on, and here I was nodding away to the auctioneer like a bloatocrat.

" 'You'll get caught,' my friend said to me.

" 'No, I shan't,' I said. 'I'm not going to run any risks.'

"And for a long time I didn't. And then a picture was put up and a short red-faced man in

a new top-hat—some well-known dealer—who had bought quite a number, electrified the room by starting the bidding at a figure a little higher than any that he had yet given or that anything had reached. Although the previous lots had run into four figures they had all been modestly started at fifty guineas or a hundred guineas, with a gradual crescendo to which I had often been safely contributing. But no sooner was the new picture displayed than the dealer made his sensational bid, 'Four thousand guineas,' he said.

"There was a rustle of excitement, and at the end of it I heard my own voice saying, 'And fifty!'

"A terrible silence followed, during which the auctioneer looked inquiringly first at the opener and then at the company generally. To my surprise and horror the red-faced dealer gave no sign of life. I realized now, as I ought to have done at first, that he had shot his bolt.

" 'Four thousand and fifty guineas offered,' said the auctioneer, again searching the room.

"My heart stopped; my blood congealed. There was no sound but a curious smothered noise from my friend.

" 'Four thousand and fifty guineas. Any advance on four thousand and fifty guineas?'—and the hammer fell.

"That was a nice pickle to be in! Here was I, with sixty-three pounds in the world and not five hundred pounds' worth of securities, the purchaser of a picture which I didn't want, for four thousand and fifty guineas, the top price of the day. Turning for some kindly support to my friend I found that he had left me; but not, as I feared at the moment, from baseness, but, as I afterwards discovered, in order to find a remote place in which to lean against the wall and laugh.

"Stunned and dazed as I was, I pulled myself together sufficiently to hand my card, nonchalantly (I hope) to the clerk who came for the millionaire collector's name, and then I set to pondering on the problem what to do next. Picture after picture was put up and sold, but I saw none of them. I was running over the names of uncles and other persons from whom it might be possible to borrow, but wasn't; wondering if the moneylenders who talk so glibly about 'note of hand only' really mean it; speculating on the possibility of confessing my poverty to one of Christie's staff and having the picture put up again. Perhaps that was the best way—and yet how could I do it after all the other bids I had made? The staff looked so prosperous and unsympathetic, and no one would believe it was a mistake. A genuine mis-

take of such a kind would have been rectified at once.

"Meanwhile the sale came to an end and I stood on the outskirts of the little knot of buyers round the desk who were writing cheques and giving instructions. Naturally I preferred to be the last. It was there that I was joined by my friend; but only for a moment, for at a look at my face he rammed his handkerchief in his mouth and again disappeared. Alone I was to dree this awful weird. I have never felt such a fool or had colder feet in all my life. I believe I should have welcomed a firing party.

"And then the unexpected happened, and I realized that a career of rectitude sometimes has rewards beyond the mere consciousness of virtue. A voice at my ear suddenly said, 'Beg pardon, Sir, but was you the gent that bought the big Daubigny?'

"I admitted it.

" 'Well, the gent who offered four thousand guineas wants to know if you'll take fifty guineas for your bid.'

"If ever a messenger of the high gods wore a green baize apron and spoke in husky Cockney tones this was he. I could have embraced him and wept for joy. Would I take fifty guineas? Why, I would have taken fifty farthings.

"But how near the surface and ready, even in

the best of us, is worldly guile! 'Is that the most he would offer?' I had the presence of mind to ask.

"'It's not for me to say,' he replied. 'No 'arm in trying for a bit more, is there?'

"'Tell him I'll take a hundred,' I said.

"And I got it.

"When I found my friend I was laughing too, but he became grave at once on seeing the cheque.

"'Well, I'm hanged!' he said. 'Of all the luck! Well, I'm hanged!'

"Then he said, 'Don't forget that if it hadn't been for me you wouldn't have come into Christie's at all.'

"'I shall never forget it,' I said. 'It is indelibly branded in letters of fire on my heart. My hair hasn't gone white, has it?'"

V: AN IMPLACABLE RACONTEUR

Some men have no pity.

"Now that's an amazing thing," said the dramatist as he sank into the chair beside me. "Did you see that man go out? Well, he's just told me a story I told him yesterday, and he told it very badly too."

"Why didn't you stop him?" I asked.

"He didn't give me a chance. A man who has a story to tell is a very difficult fellow to stop."

"You could say you'd heard it."

"Quite useless. He'd say, 'I doubt if you've heard my version,' and go right on. No, the only chance you have is to insist that it was a story that you yourself told him yesterday. That sometimes abashes them, but not always. This fellow was in full swing before I realized what was happening, and then I didn't say anything for fear of hurting his feelings. Fear of hurting other people's feelings is at the bottom of most troubles and all boredom."

I agreed.

"And then after he had begun, I was interested to see how he would finish it. It's the kind of story that depends on the finish."

"And he told it badly?" I repeated.

"Yes. He's not a raconteur, anyway; he couldn't tell any story really well, least of all a subtle one like this."

"It's a most extraordinary thing," said the doctor, who was sitting near by and now laid down his paper, "that every man seems to be under the delusion that he is a born raconteur. Why? We admit frankly that we can't act, we can't mimic, we can't sing, we can't dance even; but we all lay claim to the gift of telling a story.

Nothing in fact is so difficult as to tell a story well. It needs a score of separate gifts. And yet every one who has heard a story is under the impression that he is qualified to repeat it. Absurd. I should like to belong to a club where any member who told a story badly would be expelled."

"You're right," said the dramatist. "There ought to be a School of Narrative Art, just as there is a School of Dramatic Art."

"Ought there?" said the doctor. "I doubt it. Personally I should infinitely prefer a system designed not for encouraging story-telling, but for suppressing the practice."

So saying he left us.

"All the same," said the dramatist, "although I am not in favour of adding to the educational establishments of this country, I do hold that a school for raconteurs would be an excellent thing. The way stories are murdered and mangled to-day is something lamentable. Take the one I was talking about when you came in—the story of the close race."

"Oh, that," said I. "I've heard it."

"Yes, very likely. But I wonder if you heard it right," the dramatist pursued. "The exact phrasing has a lot to do with it."

"I expect it was all right," I said. "I had it from Travers, and he usually tells a story well."

"Do you think he does?"

"Yes, I do," I said.

"I wonder. In my version it goes like this." And he then settled down to his too congenial task.

"You can either tell it as a story frankly," he said, "or you can lure the company on to give examples of the closest races they have ever seen and then chip in with the dénouement. It's all in the dénouement."

"I know," I said; "I've heard it."

"Yes, but you must hear it right. Now I'll tell it you wrong first—as that fellow just now told it to me, and then I'll tell it my way. Well, you begin by saying that there were three men talking about close races they had seen. One said that once, when he was at Henley watching the tussle for the Goblets, the boats were absolutely level until the sun raised a blister on the bow of one of them and it won. Could there be a closer race than that? The second man said that he had once seen what was bound to be a dead-heat for the Derby until a bee stung one of the horses on the nose and, owing to the swelling, it won. That's the kind of thing—you can invent whatever nonsense you like; but you must always add, 'Could there be a closer race than that?' And then the third man says, 'Well, you may call those close races,

if you like. But I can tell you of a closer. I know the Scotch.'

"Well," the dramatist continued, "that's how the man told it to me just now; but I think that's too direct. When I tell it, I say, 'Ah, well, I suppose those were close races. But last summer I was in Aberdeen . . .' and leave it there. More subtle, don't you think?"

I said I feared it might be too subtle.

"Of course," the dramatist hastened to say, "ethnologically I think it's rot. The Scotch are not like that, really; it's just a convention to say they are. But for the purposes of the story, yes."

At this moment another member of the club drifted in and subsided into an arm-chair. The dramatist hailed him.

"I was just telling our friend here," he said, "the story of the close race. I wonder if you've heard it?"

"About the Scotch? I have," said the new arrival.

"Ah, but I doubt if you've heard my version," the dramatist persisted.

It was here that I crept away.

VI: THE BOND

"Life's rum, isn't it?" said Standish.

"In what particular?" I asked.

"In most," he said. "But just at the moment I was thinking of imperfect sympathies; I was thinking of the long time it takes to understand some people; waiting for Fate's clock to strike; and so on. When I was at Winchester thirty and more years ago, there was a boy I rather admired. But I never quite got on with him. He was reserved, and so was I; he was a little senior to me; he had a rather aloof way with him. Sometimes we seemed to be on the brink of a complete understanding, and then it all went wrong. Perhaps the best way to put it is that he attracted and repelled almost equally; but one never knew when the currents would change. Anyway, we went through our time at Winchester without ever getting properly on terms, and I regretted it then with some acuteness, and have regretted it mildly ever since."

"Yes?" I said.

"We never met after leaving school," he continued. "I went to Oxford and he didn't, and, except that I heard of him at the Bar, I knew nothing of him. For thirty years and more—thirty-three, to be exact—I had never seen him till—— Well, it was as long as that."

He paused.

"You know the phrase, 'How little did I think!' It's always cropping up in our lives—a perpetually recurring tribute to the way in

which the more distant and apparently irreconcilable events are linked together. 'How little did I think!' You've said it to yourself scores of times?"

"More like hundreds," I replied.

"Yes, hundreds," he repeated. "But never have I said it with more astonishment than this morning. I'll tell you. You know my son?"

"The one who was lunching with you the other day?" I asked. "The sailor?"

"Yes, I've only one."

"A nice frank boy I thought him," I said.

"Yes, I think he is; I hope so. The sea's good for them. Gives them level eyes; keeps them simple. Well, latterly, he's been having some leave, and he seems to have spent it in the usual way, for he came to me the other day and said he was engaged. The prettiest, sweetest girl in the world, and all the rest of it. It was sooner than I had been hoping; I had even made some foolish plans about holiday jaunts with him alone. What's the use?" He sighed. "Anyway, there it was, and as everything seemed settled I had to acquiesce—always provided that there was similarly no objection on the side of the girl's people. Her father, it seemed, was being told at the same time that I was. 'What is her father?' I asked. Odd how one says 'what?' before 'who?' The boy didn't

know—very characteristically. His name, then? Hurley. The only Hurley I had ever met was my school-fellow at Winchester—the boy with whom I had never been able quite to get on terms. You see what's coming?"

I said that it looked easy, but there was often a catch.

He continued: "It was arranged that I should call on him, and this morning I did so; and he was my Winchester Hurley, after all. Of course he was; he had to be! Well, we fixed up the engagement, and I saw the girl—she's pretty, right enough—and then we began to talk, and I told him just what I've been telling you about my feelings for him at school; and what do you think he said? He said, 'That's exactly how I used to feel about you. I wanted you for a friend, and I couldn't get you, and it worried me.' "

Standish was silent for a moment. Then he added with a smile: "Hurley's dining with me here to-night."

"Splendid," I said.

"But the joke is," he went on, "that suddenly we both began to say, simultaneously, 'How little did I think——' "

I laughed. "Of course."

"It is odd, isn't it, life?" he resumed. "Here were two boys failing to get to know each other,

and then, thirty years after, they are brought together, and without any of the old hesitation or awkwardness, by the agency of their children. School-boys' children! Children unborn, unthought of, were to fix it up. Devilish rum!"

FATE

HISTORY is said to repeat itself, but few persons live long enough to notice it doing so. Except, of course, in the matter of miners' strikes. On the other hand, any one who keeps a diary can prove that weather repeats itself with some steadiness. The benignant Good Friday that rejoiced us all the other day, for example, was an exact replica of a Good Friday about a dozen years ago, when I was spending Easter with some friends in Surrey, in one of those pleasant half-timbered gabled houses on the slopes of Leith Hill.

There was no lawn tennis yet, for Easter was early and the fine weather very sudden, and so after lunch it was suggested that some of us should walk over to Coldharbour "to see the girls."

"You'd like to," my hostess said to me, "wouldn't you?"

And I said "Yes," on the ground of general friendliness, or even amativeness, although who the girls were I had no notion.

On arriving at a tiny cottage with a garden stretching down to the road, it was discovered

that they were two art students who had made this their country home. Very jolly girls, too, and very pretty in their blue smocks. One in particular—the fair-haired one—I admired.

It was after we had finished tea that the fair-haired girl, who had been down at the gate looking along the road at the many stragglers from town tempted out by the fine weather and the holiday, suddenly said, "Wouldn't it be a joke to put up a 'Teas Provided' notice! All those poor things are dying for tea. And," she added wistfully, "it might help us to pay our rent."

"Why not?" I said. "All you want is a board to stick the notice to"; and we instantly became busy with the game. The girls put their biggest kettles on the fire; others were set to cutting bread-and-butter; some one was dispatched to a neighbour's for more milk and butter; pots of jam were excavated from the store-cupboard; and I was given the task of fixing up the placard in a conspicuous position.

It worked like magic. I had hardly turned round from surveying the board when the first customers entered.

Customers continued to enter until all the food was eaten and quite a lot of money had been taken, and we were all tired out with our duties. And the experiment had been so suc-

cessful that all the customers expressed satisfaction and the determination not only to return some day but to recommend the place to their friends.

But "Never again!" the girls vowed, as they contemplated their empty larder: so empty that we had to carry them back with us to dinner.

That was—how many years ago?—ten years at least, during which I never saw them, or indeed thought of them.

This last Easter I had no such adventure, being kept in town. But early spring chancing to be the one time when London is just about as good as the country, I did not complain: and as I walked through Kensington Gardens on Good Friday afternoon I felt as contented with life and as confident of a summer in store for us as any one in the real Arcady could be. Many of the trees were covered with tender green buds; others were merely holding back; blackbirds were singing. Every one was in holiday mood. Some day, not far distant, the Oval and Lord's would open their gates!

I paused by the Round Pond to watch the navigators at their play, and was conscious of a small boy, with a Sealyham frisking about his feet, who was waiting, pole in hand, for his wayward ship to make harbour. I was peculiarly interested in this little boy, because of his

eagerness and the radiance which emanated from his clear skin and sunny locks; he seemed to add to the light of the day, perhaps actually did so. He was dressed in one of those suits of (woollen) mail in which children now run about so attractively, the colour being a ruddy tint somewhere between the flesh of a salmon trout and the bricks of Hampton Court, and altogether he was very pleasant indeed to look upon.

The vessel having given up its circular tackings and at last condescended to reach shore, the little boy was joined by his mother, a tall, graceful young woman in the late twenties, whom I felt sure I had seen before but could not place, and they prepared to leave. As they passed me a look of recognition came into her eyes and she smiled, and instantly I knew who she was. She was one of the two girls who had the cottage near Leith Hill—the one who, on that other happy Good Friday, had suggested putting up the notice, "Teas Provided."

We recalled this incident as I walked with her towards Campden Hill.

"Do you remember who our first customers were?" she asked.

I said that I couldn't exactly.

"Surely you remember?" she said. "An oldish man and his undergraduate son."

"Oh, yes, of course," I said. "In grey tweeds. The son rather nervous and shy."

She laughed.

"Do you see any likeness between him and my little boy?" she inquired.

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed. "Did you ——Surely——But that's destiny if you like. That was asking for it."

"Yes," she replied, "wasn't it? We became engaged that summer."

THE INJUSTICE

IF I were able to converse with the dead, one of the first persons to whom I should try to get an introduction would be Murillo, because I have so strongly on my mind an injustice to that painter which is being done systematically every day in the cathedral at Seville. I think he ought to know about it and put it right.

Imagine the introduction completed: Murillo called by a celestial page from some favoured spot near the Throne—for one who painted the Son and the Mother as he did must be honoured exceedingly—to what corresponds in Heaven to an earthly telephone-box, and myself at the other end of the invisible broadcasting wire.

Then, "Master," I should say, assuming that to the disembodied all languages are equally simple—"Master, you remember your picture in Seville Cathedral—'St. Anthony of Padua visited by the Infant Saviour'—one of those you painted for the Chapter?"

And Murillo, although he painted so much and so freely, and although St. Anthony was more than once his subject, would, I feel sure,

have a very distinct remembrance of this beautiful thing.

"It is now in the Baptistery of the Cathedral," I should, however, explain, in case he might have forgotten; "the first chapel on the left as you enter from the north-west door, just past the inner door of the Sagradio.

"You go in out of the blinding Seville sun," I should continue.

Here I imagine Murillo would smile wistfully.

"And from the shattering noise of the trams. . . ."

"Trams?" he would ask in wonder; and I should have to explain what trams are, and rebuke myself for being such a bungler as to mention them and confuse the issue.

Then I should hurry on: "You go out of the street into restful gloom and perfect quiet—unless perhaps the organ is being played. But you know all this?"

And Murillo would indicate that he knew, perhaps again not without a certain wistfulness.

"And now," I should say, "to come to the injustice. Your 'St. Anthony' hangs in the little chapel, which is always barred and bolted and always dark, except when well-to-do visitors want to see it. Then, and only then, is the chapel unlocked and the blind of the window pulled up. That is to say, the sight of your

beautiful painting, made for the House of God, every corner of which should be open and free to all—the sight of this painting is obtainable only by those who can afford to pay the sacristan a fee. What do you think about it?"

And Murillo, I am sure, would be seriously disturbed.

"I can't believe," he might say, "that the Church—my Church—is as mercenary as that. Don't you think there is a fear that constant light might injure the picture?"

"There is constant light in the Seville Museum," I should reply, "where seventeen of your masterpieces hang, including your favourite, the 'St. Thomas distributing Alms.' "

And at the mention of this picture Murillo, I think, would utter a sigh, for of all his works the "St. Thomas" was the one he loved best.

"And in the Prado," I should go on, "a room is dedicated to you, and the blinds are always up."

"Do you really mean to tell me," Murillo would say, "that my 'St. Anthony,' in the Cathedral, is not normally visible at all? That visitors to the Cathedral are absolutely unable to see it without applying to the sacristan?"

And I should have to tell him that that is the case.

"And do people want to see it, try to see it?" he might ask.

And I should tell him that there are always some at the bars trying to pierce the gloom or waiting for a party of wealthy tourists to arrive with the sacristan.

"And the sacristan receives money?"

"Every time."

"And I painted for the poor!" Murillo would exclaim. "I painted for the poor and the simple. I took my Madonna from the people, and my Holy Child from the people! Does not the Archbishop of Seville know about it?"

"Apparently he has not thought it worth while to interfere."

"But the ecclesiastics in charge of the Cathedral—don't they know?"

"They too have not interfered," I should have to reply.

And Murillo would be silent for a while.

"It is not only the poor," I should resume. "There are other people denied your picture too —those who hold that the Church's treasures of art should be free to all, and who therefore refuse to pay. Did you not intend this picture to be as accessible as, say, the Confessionals?"

"Of course, of course! Then what is to be done?" he would ask after another silence.

"I was wondering," I should say, "if you

couldn't speak to St. Peter about it? St. Peter is naturally *en rapport* with the Vatican, and he would let the Pope know. And then, of course, the Pope would go into the whole question of such fees. He cannot be aware how prevalent they are or he would have acted long ago."

"WHENEVER I SEE A GREY HORSE . . ."

I

ALL horses are beautiful, but a grey can be more beautiful than any.

You remember Tagalie, who won the Derby in 1912? She was a pretty grey, if you like!

No matter what the horse may be—racer or teamster—there is always something peculiarly attractive in a grey.

One does not see a pair of high-stepping greys very often now, in these days of petrol and machinery, yet when one does, how they can make the heart beat!

But in future whenever I see them I shall be conscious only of a sharp pain.

In future whenever I see a grey horse I shall feel indignation and shame flushing through me.

II

"Of course you will go to a bull-fight while you are there," every one had said.

"I suppose so," I had replied. "It would be ridiculous to be in Spain and miss the chance. One, at any rate."

III

The setting of a bull-fight is wonderful.

First and foremost, you are in Spain, and to be in Spain is to be thrilled.

You may not care for much that is Spanish; but Spain is a country like no other: it is so old and so self-contained; it is so lazy and so hot; it has such vast cathedrals and such noble bridges; such flowers and such fruits; and in Spain nobody cares and everybody sleeps.

Above all, it is a country of the past.

Spain still has a million mules to every motor-car, and at any moment the muleteers might all have reined up to look with the greater ease and thoroughness at the odd figure of the rider of Rosinante, as he approached, lance in rest.

What would seem to be the very sheep which that tragic romantic gentleman took for armies you may watch from the train as they graze where no grass is visible. You find the same windmills that he thought were giants, waving their arms. The paths are as steep, the plains as vast and as uninhabited, and the food is as simple and plentiful as when the Knight of the Rueful Countenance sought his adventures.

Were he to return he would, outside the cities, find almost nothing new but the scent of tobacco.

IV

None of the preparations for a great spectacle can be dull; but to the stranger—and perhaps to the initiated—those of a bull-fight have special intensity. The atmosphere is charged with excitement.

There is so much to watch.

The great gay arena itself, with its myriad seats gradually filling under no roof but the blue of the sky.

The yellow and red patterned sand of the ring.

The spectators seeking their places, all carrying cushions to put on the hard bricks; all animated, hailing their friends, laughing, disputing, expectant and full of that odd blend of carelessness, leisureliness, and independence which makes Spain more democratic even than that great Republic of the West which, but for a Spanish sailor, might never have been heard of.

The women with their black, black eyes and red, red lips, their lace veils, and their swaying, voluptuous contours.

When they have found their places and have

spread their dazzling shawls on the railing, they look around, while the men turn on them their long, bold, appraising gaze.

(Why is it that in Latin countries the glance is so neglected and the stare such a rite?)

And over all is the sun; everything is swimming in his hot light.

In the ring is activity too. A gang of men are sprinkling the coloured sand with a long hose; others are carrying the various implements of the spectacle—poles, darts, cloaks.

Now and then one of the actual heroes, all brilliant in his uniform, will emerge from a doorway, and, walking around the narrow circular passage outside the barrier, collect homage, return salutations, here and there touching the hand of an admirer and exchanging a word or two. How proud the admirer!

A brass band in hot orange uniform plays from time to time; but the symphony of human voices is constant, amid it rising occasionally the louder cries of the water-sellers and the fruit-sellers and the sellers of cigarettes and cigars.

I know of no scene more sparkling, more glaringly showy than this.

And whenever I see a grey horse, I shall see it.

But whenever I see a grey horse I shall also see . . .

V

And then, four o'clock having come, the trumpets (it is the only occasion on which Spain is punctual) sound the start, and at the blast two police officers in traditional black velvet robes canter into the ring and, advancing towards the Royal Box, make their obeisance and receive permission to begin. They then return to the entrance and lead in the army of attack—the matadores, the banderilleros, the capeadores and the picadores, with all the camp-followers about them, and lastly the harnessed mules that are to drag away the carcasses.

In they come, marching to the brazen music and throwing their glittering chests: a formidable array indeed to encounter the puzzled, frightened creature from an Andalusian farm, which for the last few hours has been fretting and pawing in the pitch-darkness of a cell a few yards from the arena!

All having made their salutations, the ring is cleared, save for the capeadores, or cloak-wavers, and the great moment arrives.

VI

The business of goading and killing a bull lasts for about twenty minutes, and these twenty

minutes are made up of moments of interest and excitement that is sometimes intense; but the only really great moment is the first.

You look around and the arena is empty save for a few men with red cloaks at the far side.

Then—suddenly—the bull.

The barrier has opened and shut again, and there he is—all lonely and surprised, with a questioning air not unmingled with annoyance, his great brown head lowered.

For a while he stands still, taking what stock his eyes, muddled by the recent darkness and the present glare, are capable of.

Where he is he has no notion, for he has never seen anything like this before.

The sun has become so dazzling.

Fourteen thousand human beings are watching.

And the colours that he hates are everywhere: the ground is red and yellow and, over there, what are those moving figures with red cloths?

He tries to get back, and there is no door.

He begins to scent danger. . . .

The bull, I take it, does not know what his fate is to be; for who could have informed him? Dead bulls tell no tales. Nor why should he imagine anything so unpleasant? He has been well cared for; and those other bulls, his friends, who, from time to time, had left the farm, had,

it is true, never returned, but there was no reason to suppose that cruelty or harm had befallen them.

The bull may not know, but very soon he comes to suspect. . . .

This bull was suspicious now. He was also getting very angry.

But the principal impression that he conveyed was one of perplexity. To him the whole thing was so bewildering it was an outrage. . . .

VII

The capeadores now advanced to fulfil their purpose, which is to increase this perplexity.

One hears that these men carry their lives in their hands, but I saw no sign of the bull being an antagonist to be feared by any expert practitioner; for, apart altogether from his bemused condition, his onset is so undisciplined, his rushes are so brainless and mechanical, that to deflect his course is easy; and he seems to have been gifted by Providence with neither idea nor power of turning and beginning again. Once past the cloak, which engages all his attention, he is innocuous until the next provocation sets in.

Fear is, however, not absent, for the capea-

dores are continually fleeing to the bolt holes in the barrier with ignominious speed.

VIII

Each capeadore having displayed his prowess and address, applause being awarded them according to their proximity to the bull and the exercise of the minimum of movement in avoiding him—merely to sway the body away being, of course, far more admirable than to use the feet (but oh! how pathetically dazed and stupid the creature is!)—the next act begins.

The horses enter.

IX

Whenever I see a grey horse I shall see, above all, one of these, who was also grey.

All four of them were thin and old, but the grey was the oldest and the leanest. Its emaciation was terrible; and the man on its back was so large and robust and prosperous.

I have said that the bull probably does not know his fate, although he must come to suspect it; but since certain of the horses have left bull-rings alive (though only to enter again) some tidings of their destiny have no doubt reached the others.

Besides, they may have caught sight behind the scenes of a not too badly injured comrade being sewn up to serve again.

And so this poor old grey may have known.

But even if he did know he could not have appeared more hopeless, more despairingly in need of friendship from that super-animal of whom he is notoriously the friend.

But there was no kindness for him there.

On each horse was a brawny fellow in gay trappings, carrying a long pole, at the end of which is an iron spike with which a certain muscle in the bull's shoulder is to be severed; and all wore, for what I was to learn was a good reason, thick leggings and enormous boots.

The time having come, the horses' eyes were covered with black bandages, and the second act of the drama began in earnest.

I was expecting to see steeds capable of escaping from the bull's attacks. I now learned that towards them, all blind and quiescent and infirm, the bull had to be lured, and cheated into an assault which has no real significance in the contest whatever.

This cheating is the task of the men with the red cloaks; it is they who by a series of rushes gradually bring the angry, puzzled creature near a horse and persuade him that that horse is his foe.

What the natural attitude of a bull to a horse is, I cannot say; but I should doubt if it is hostile. I seem to have seen horses and cattle grazing peacefully in common.

The old grey certainly could have had no quarrel with the bull, nor the bull with him; but by the time the capeadores and picadores have done their duty, a bull is incapable of distinguishing anything and might think its favourite cow its deadliest enemy.

So then, finding itself near the grey, whose only offence was this contiguity, and who was being held up by the surrounding athletes so that there might be nc evasion, the bull, so incapable of any form of retaliation on all these quick-witted, quick-footed men, lowered its head and charged. . . .

It was the most sickening and debased moment of my life.

The tottering victim was actually lifted from the ground. . . .

Its bowels. . . .

The bull was now lost to all shame. He had found a butt and was wreaking his muddled vengeance on it.

Again and again the horns entered and tore; his shaggy head was bright with blood.

At the first shock the horse was astounded: his whole body trembled with astonishment and

pain. Then he gradually sank and fell over, his rider winning rounds of applause by remaining in the saddle till the last possible moment. Not exactly in the saddle but half in and half out, the leg nearest the bull, and therefore in the danger zone, having long been raised out of danger. . . .

Upholders of bull-fights have said to me that the circumstance that the horses are so old, and must soon die anyway, is a palliation. But is it?

I doubt if this disembowelling, even though essential to the sport, need be so deliberate.

x

The grey being no long game—for even the loyallest horse must fail to provide further amusement when most of his vital organs are strewing the ground—the capeadores drew the bull away towards another.

But he seemed to have lost interest in them.

He was incited by every device; he was prodded and goaded by the picadores; but he did no more than gore two horses with so casual a disdain that it was possible, when this session of the fight closed, for them to be cantered off with only a few of their entrails hanging out.

XI

In the next act the bull is engaged and enraged by the banderilleros, who, holding a ribboned dart in each hand, manœuvre until it is in position and then fling them into his skin in a sensitive part just behind the head where they prick and sting and infuriate.

There seemed to be some peril in this proceeding, but attendant capeadores, all ready with distractions, dilute it.

XII

And then came the final scene when the matador administers the fatal thrust. For the bull has no sporting chance. He never escapes.

With his long sharp rapier concealed by his cloak—although not so concealed, I fancied, that the bull was without suspicion, or shall I say (for he must have been tiring of so much life) without hope?—the famous artist played with his victim for a few minutes with perfect composure and mastery, and then, seizing his opportunity, plunged the steel into its side, near the shoulder, and left it there.

The bull staggered a little, regained its steadiness, looked round at us all wonderingly

and with a hint of reproach, and made an effort to regain its strength; and then its knees bent and it rolled over and, quivering, expired.

It was a record kill, I understand, and the spectators were rapturous.

And then in trotted the two teams of mules with their tackle, one of which dragged the carcass of the bull out of the arena that he had dignified, and the other the carcass of the grey horse, which had been left where it fell, dead, done for and negligible.

And the great gay concourse, of which I made one, lit new cigarettes and exchanged criticisms on the merits of the fray, and prepared for the next encounter.

XIII

But I had seen enough.

My ticket entitled me to witness the deaths of five more of the handsomest bulls in Andalusia; but I came away.

And now, and henceforward, whenever I see a grey horse . . .